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Wrestling YEARBOOK

COLLECTOR'S
164
PAGES!
EDITION

Insider Scouting Reports on 50 Top Stars!

Strengths

Weaknesses

Their Smartest Moves

Their Biggest Blunders

Secrets They Don't Want Exposed

FALL 2005
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Editor's NOTE

WE ALL WATCH wrestling all the time, but just how closely are any of us watching what we see in the ring?

When Shelton Benjamin locks on an armbar, is he usually twisting the left arm or the right? When A.J. Styles hits one of his spectacular dives outside the ring, does he have a "tell" that telegraphs his intentions to his opponent?

Those are the sorts of questions we set out to answer here in our exclusive scouting reports on 50 of wrestling's top stars. We dug beneath the surface, beyond the finishing moves, and evaluated the top names in the game in a variety of categories. Our analysis takes in each wrestler's career accomplishments as well as in-depth critiques of the nuances of his or her ring strategy and execution.

Our staff of editors and writers conducted an exhaustive study of hours of videotape, and then met in a roundtable discussion to break down each wrestler's particular strengths and weaknesses. Some of our findings were fairly obvious: Spike Dudley needs to bulk up if he wants to make a long-term impact, and Jeff Jarrett relies *far* too heavily on guitar shots. Some of our other findings were a bit more subtle, but true nonetheless: Chris Jericho tends to get sloppy on his offense when his adrenaline starts flowing, while Mr. Benjamin tends to start slowly and awkwardly until he catches a rhythm a few minutes into a match.

Our intention here is to give PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED readers a bit more insight into some of the intricacies of wrestling and to point out areas in which certain wrestlers excel and others in which they could use some improvement. While it may seem overly critical at times, we are trying to be as objective as possible and fairly assess the performances and career paths of wrestling's top stars. We want to help you understand them all a little better.

Of course, we also had our share of fun in our scouting reports, too, such as suggesting Raven desperately needs to bring back Kimona Wana-Laya, if for no other reason than some of us miss seeing her at ringside in those skimpy mini-skirts.

The last time we attempted a scouting report project of this magnitude was back in 1999. The wrestling landscape has changed an awful lot in the past six years, and I think our analysis has evolved with the times, growing more scrutinizing and insightful. We have also included some of the best posed and action wrestling photography you will find anywhere, with sharp, crisp images just begging to be cut out and hung on bedroom walls or inside school lockers.

While the analysis was, indeed, a group effort, special thanks go out to Senior Writer Dan Murphy, who spearheaded the project, conducted research, and typed every word you are about to read.

I hope you find these scouting reports to be fair, enlightening, and—most of all—entertaining. I'm very proud of the magazine you hold in your hands, and I hope you enjoy the finished product immensely.

●●●●● Dave Lenker
Editor-in-Chief

PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED

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Founder
(1919-2002)

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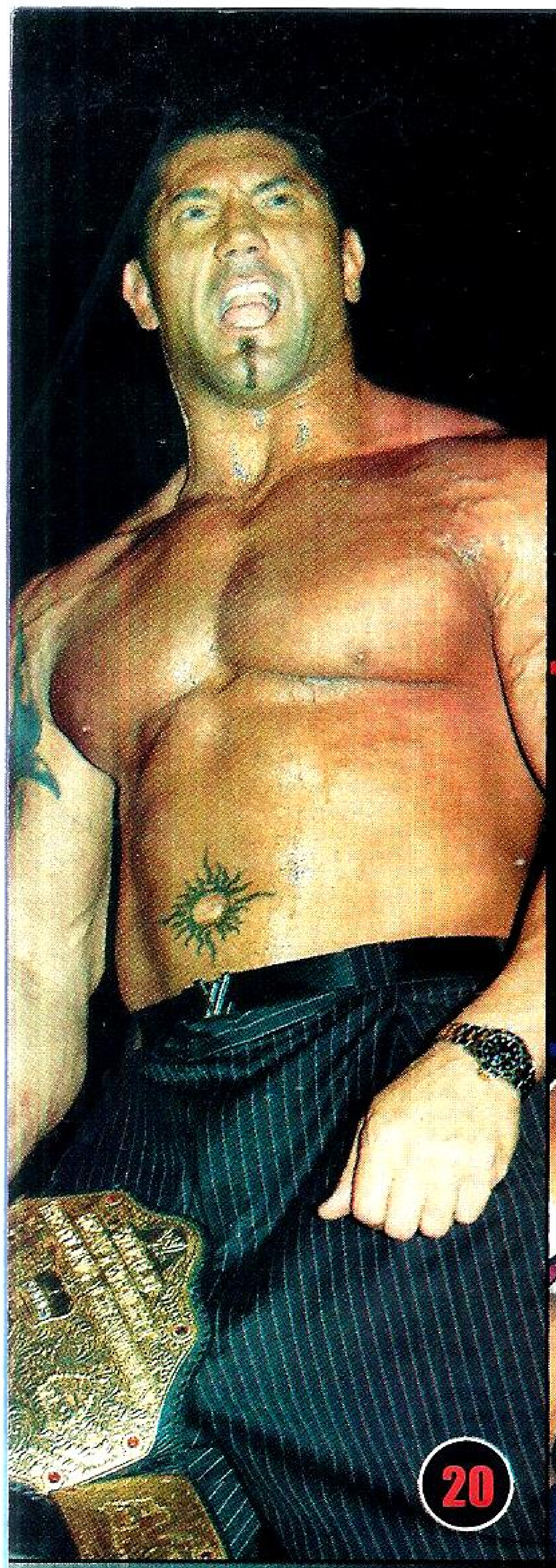
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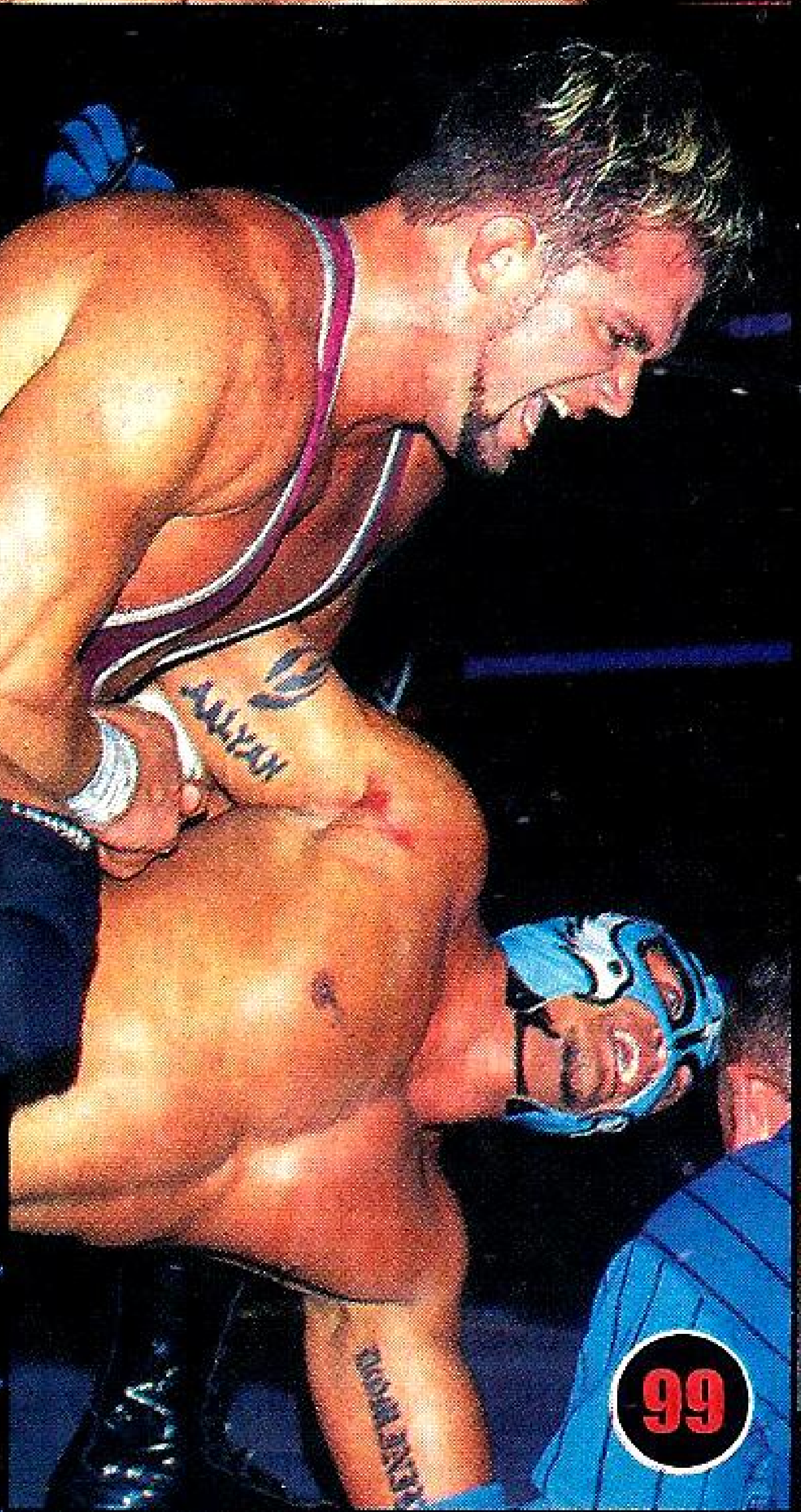
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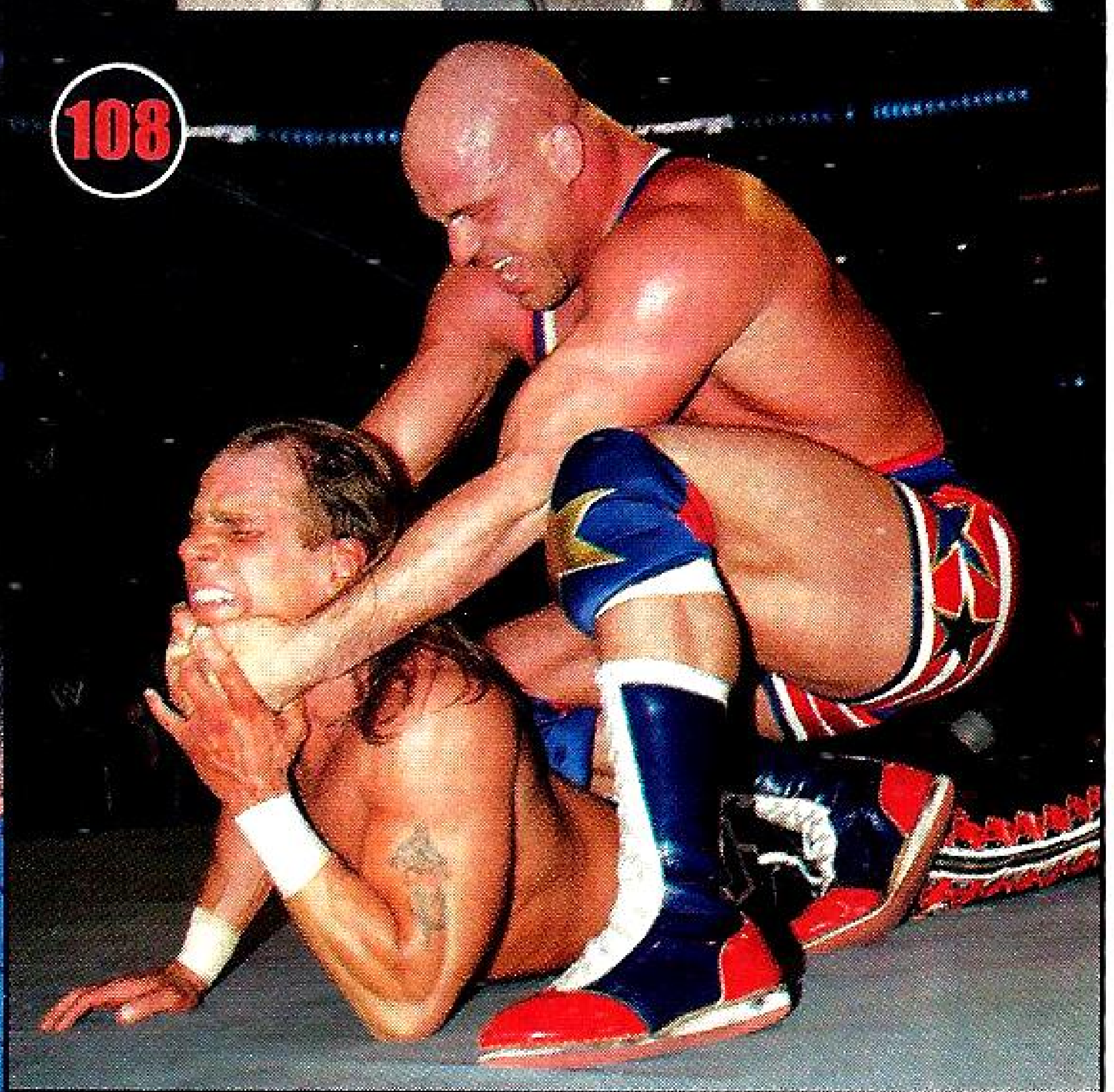
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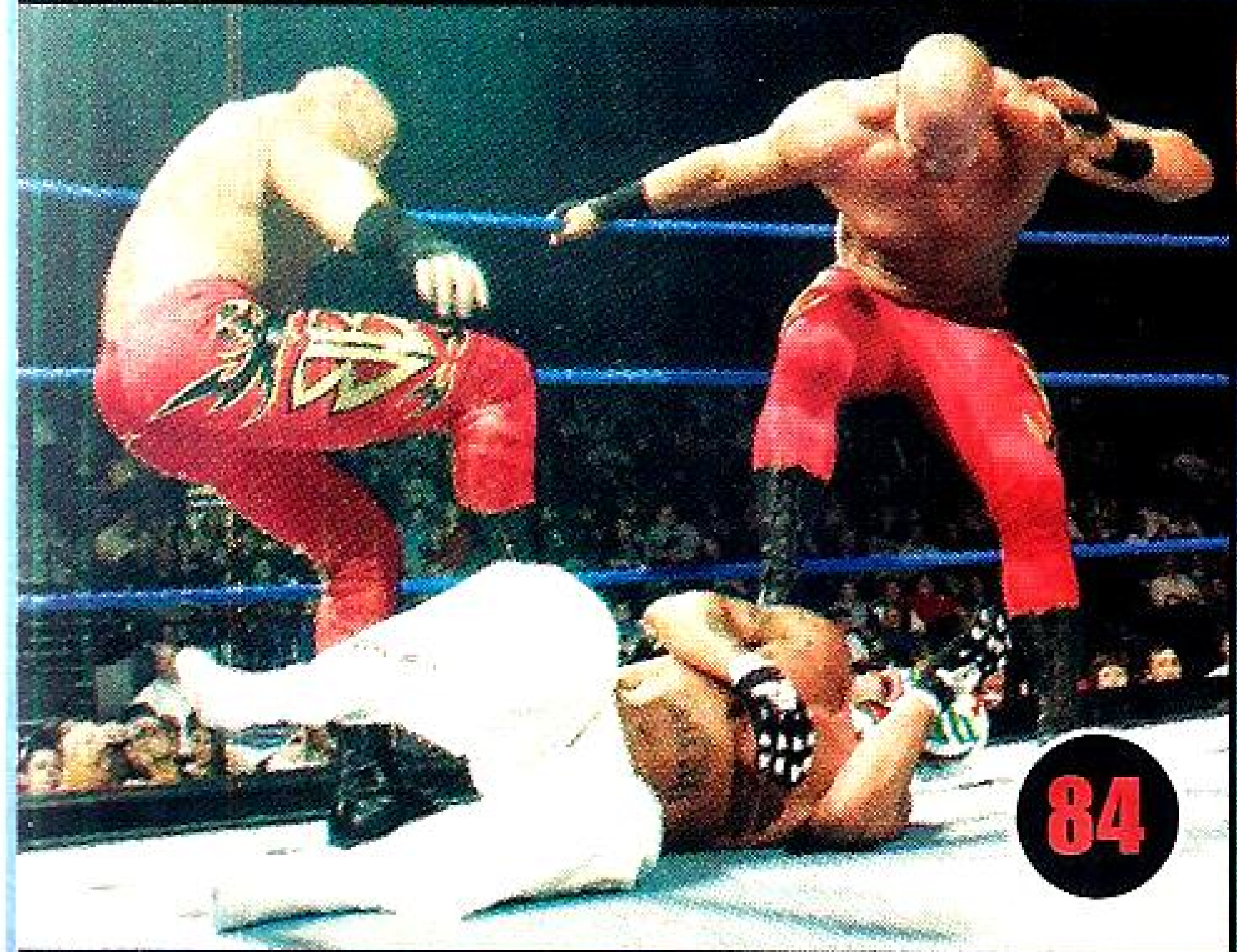
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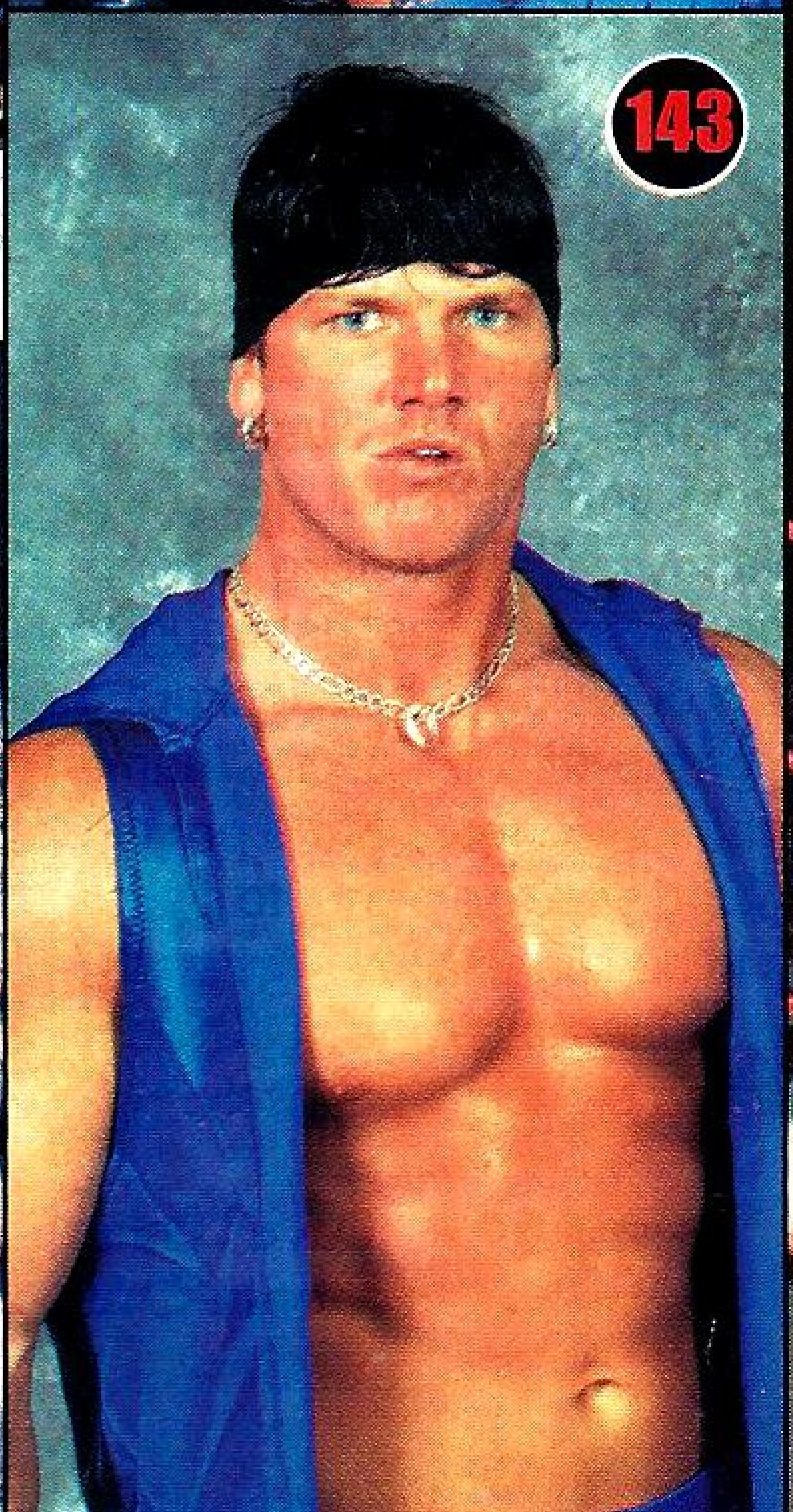
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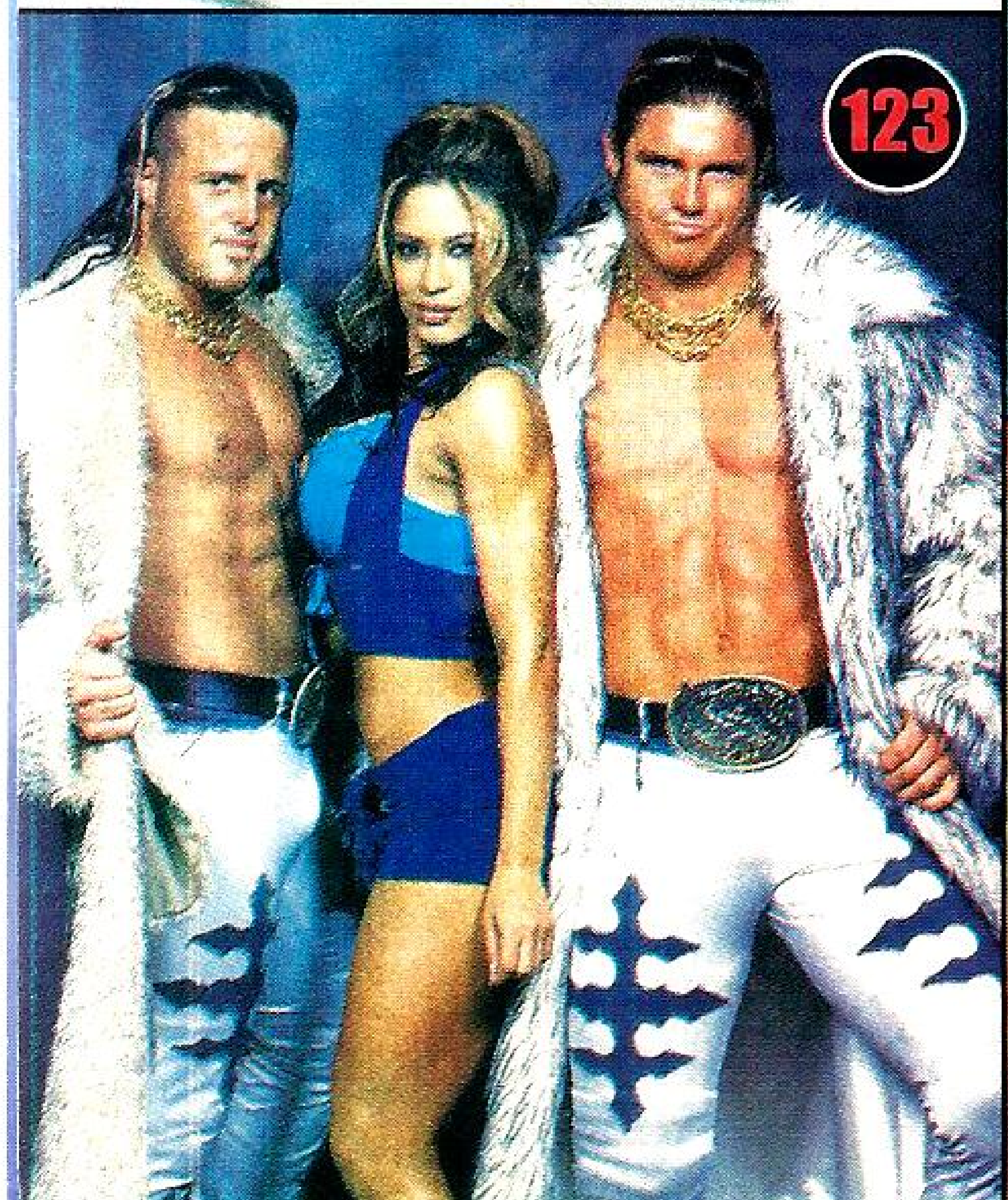
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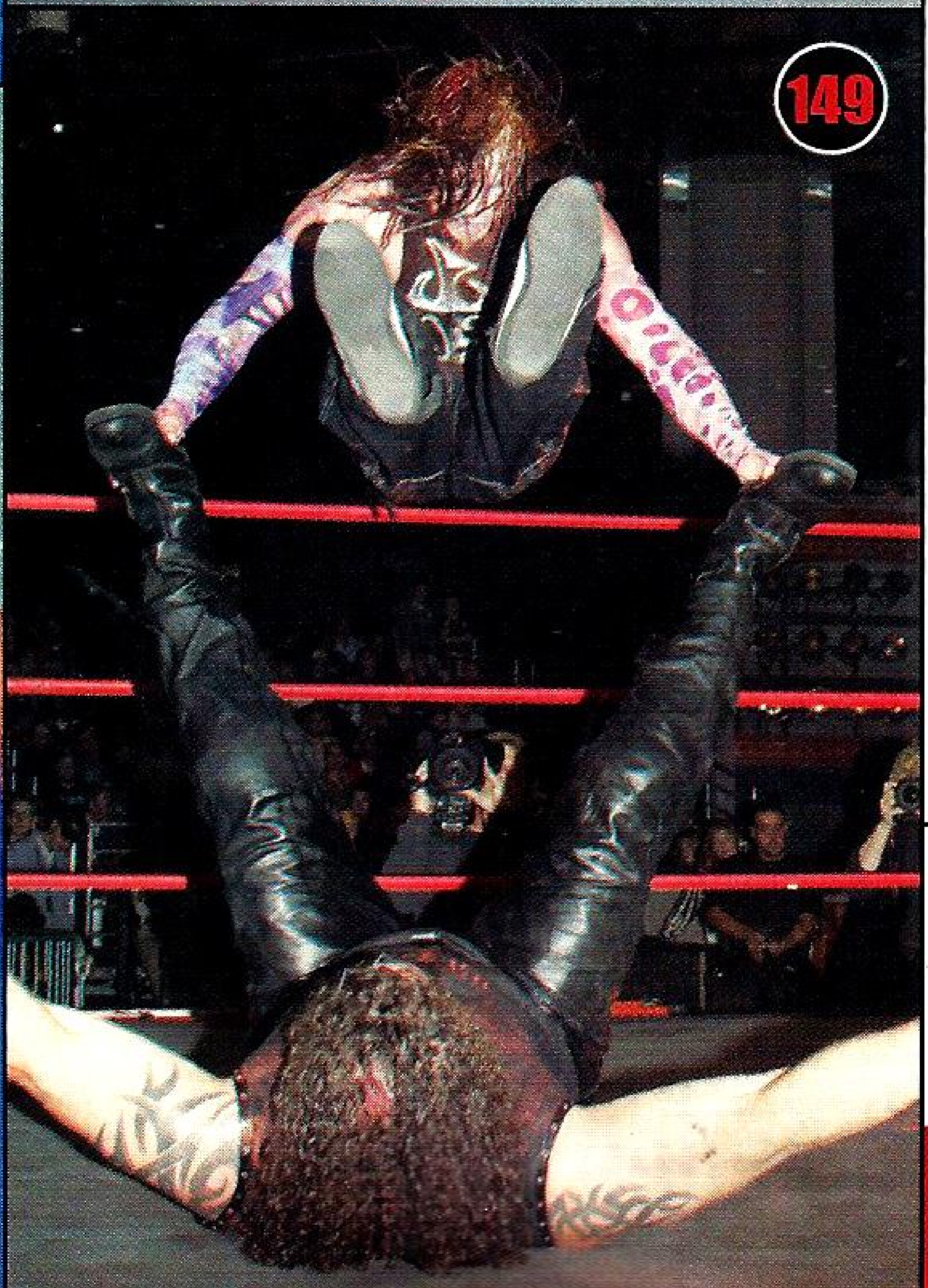
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Pro Wrestling Illustrated presents

Wrestling YEARBOOK

fall 2005

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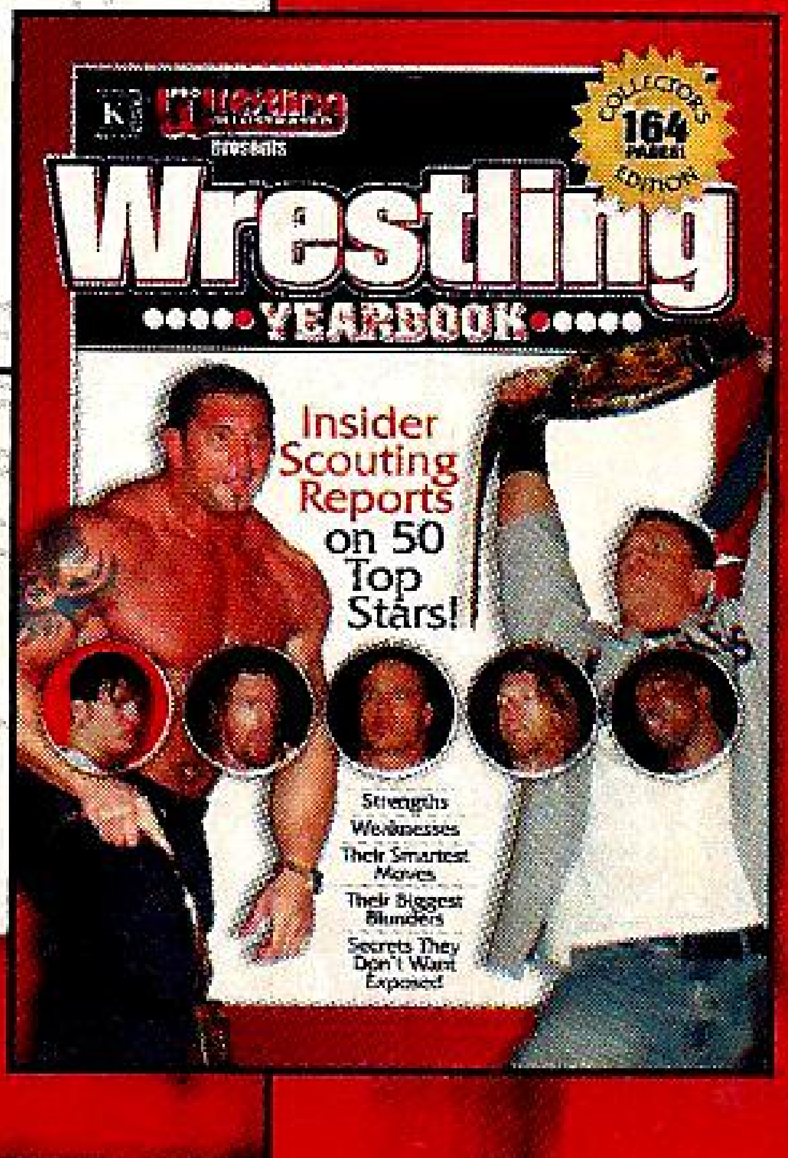

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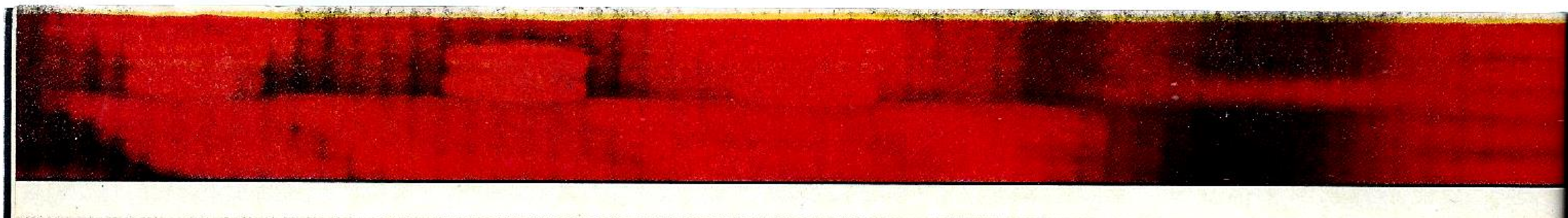


TRIPLE-H

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'5"
WEIGHT: 269
HOMETOWN: Greenwich, CT
YEARS PRO: 13
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE World (5 times), WWE Raw (4 times), WWE Intercontinental (4 times), WWE European (2 times), WWE World tag team, IWF heavyweight
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 225 in 1994, 84 in 1995, 79 in 1996, 31 in 1997, 24 in 1998, 26 in 1999, 1 in 2000, 6 in 2001, 10 in 2002, 2 in 2003, 3 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Match (2004, 1st runner-up in 2002, 2001, and in 2000), Most Hated (2004, 2003, 1st runner-up in 2000 and in 1999, 3rd runner-up in 2002), Wrestler (1st runner-up in 2000, 2nd runner-up in 2003 and in 2002) Feud (2004, 2000, 1st runner-up in 2000 and in 1999, 2nd runner-up in 2002)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Love him or hate him, "The Game" is the Raw brand's franchise player ... Trained by Killer Kowalski ... Competed in WCW in 1994 before joining the WWF as Hunter Hearst Helmsley, the Connecticut blue blood ... Won the Intercontinental title for the first time with the help of adviser Curt Hennig ... Introduced Chyna as his bodyguard and won the 1997 King of the Ring Tournament ... Joined Shawn Michaels in a group called DeGeneration X ... Declared himself the new leader of DX after Michaels lost the World title to Steve Austin at WrestleMania XIV ... Feuded with The Rock over the I-C title ... Beat Mankind for the World title in August 1999 ... Scored big wins over Steve Austin The Rock, and Cactus Jack ... Beat Rock in a 60-minute "Ironman" match for his fourth World title at Judgment Day 2000 ... Beat Austin in a best-of-three-falls match at No Way Out 2001 ... Formed the "Two-Man Power Trip" with Austin in the spring of 2001 but suffered a torn quadriceps muscle that kept him out of action until January 2002 ... Returned as a fan favorite, winning the undisputed WWE World title from Chris Jericho at WrestleMania X8 ... Turned against Michaels and engaged in a brutal feud that they still revisit on occasion ... After surviving challenges from Scott Steiner and Booker T, lost and regained the WWE Raw belt from Goldberg ... Formed Evolution as his answer to The Four Horsemen ... Still smarting from his Raw title loss to Batista at WrestleMania 21.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Winning the four-way main event of WrestleMania XVI. Triple-H became the first heel to win in the main event of WrestleMania, and he did it by outlasting and outsmarting The Rock, Mick Foley, and The Big Show. In an era in which Rock and Steve Austin were top stars, Triple-H's win was a declaration that he wasn't going to fade into the background. Five years and five more world titles later, he's still WWE's most dominant force.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Triple-H is a power wrestler with deceptive scientific skills. He's almost as likely to apply an Indian deathlock or figure-four as he is to go for his trusty sledgehammer. He is a very well-rounded wrestler and brawler and is more than capable of wrestling 30, 45, or even 60 minutes.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Triple-H is too concerned about being the favorite in every match. He is a slave to his own ego, and because of that fact, he is constantly underestimating challengers. When "The Game" takes a foe lightly, that's when he loses.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Hunter yearns for respect from his peers and the media, as much as he claims he doesn't care about what other people say about him. He wants to face wrestlers who

Triple-H whacks former pal Batista with a chair

will help him earn that respect. Give him Kurt Angle, A.J. Styles, Toshiaki Kawada, and Samoa Joe. Sure, only one of those matches is in the realm of possibility now, but those are four wrestlers Triple-H should want to face.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

For the time being, Hunter should stay away from Batista, whose strength has overwhelmed him every time they have clashed to date. Hunter made a smart move by "walking away" for a while. That way, he could study Batista from afar and look for weaknesses. It wouldn't have hurt him to stay away for longer than he did.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A touch of humility. Yeah, yeah, we've all heard Triple-H talk about how he's "that damn good." Yadda, yadda, yadda. He has more worlds to conquer if he truly wants to be remembered as an all-time great. If he thinks he's already the greatest thing since Lou Thesz, he's dead wrong.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Signing Ric Flair as his manager. Triple-H has patterned his entire career after Flair's. By hooking up with Flair, he got an opportunity to learn from the master himself.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Signing an open contract for WrestleMania XII. It took The Ultimate Warrior only 98 seconds to squash Hunter. That still eats him up inside.

WE SAID IT:

"Forget about all the backstage politics. Triple-H is the ultimate wrestling villain. Like Flair, you may hate him, but you have to respect everything he has accomplished and his pure ability."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Hunter seems obsessed with surpassing Flair's record of 16 world titles, but that's really like comparing apples and oranges. Back when Flair was on top, world titles didn't change hands nearly as frequently. Flair was the dominant competitor in his promotion for more than 12 years, and then dominated in the WWF. Regardless of how many belts he wins, it'll take another 10 years before Hunter can begin to compare himself to Flair."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"Triple-H might never get respect from the Internet crowd, largely due to the fact that he married Vince McMahon's daughter. I don't think that will change. It's too bad, because he is one of the most talented wrestlers of our generation."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

Shelton BENJAMIN

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'2"
WEIGHT: 245
HOMETOWN: Minneapolis, MN
YEARS PRO: 4
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Intercontinental, WWE Smackdown tag team (2 times), OVW Southern tag team (4 times)
***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 153 in 2001, 132 in 2002, 30 in 2003, 16 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Tag Team (2003), Most Improved (1st runner-up in 2004, 2nd runner-up in 2003)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

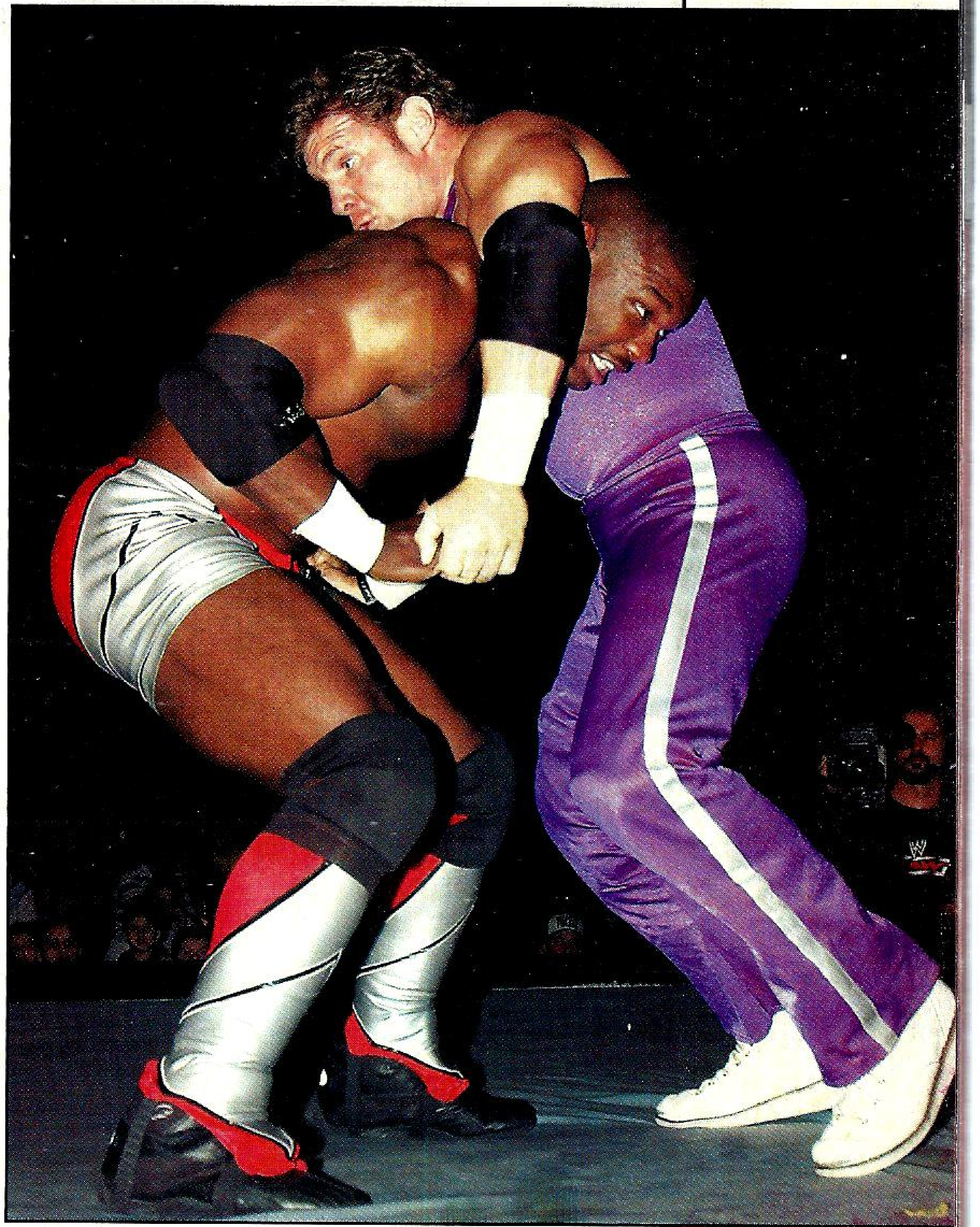
Amateur phenom went 122-10 as a state wrestling champion in high school in 1993 and 1994 and then went 36-6 with the University of Minnesota ... Sent to OVW after signing a WWE developmental deal ... Paired with fellow amateur standout Brock Lesnar as The Minnesota Stretching Crew ... Won the OVW Southern tag belts three times with Lesnar and once with Redd Dogg (Rodney Mack) ... Recruited by Kurt Angle to be part of Team Angle along with Charlie Haas ... They beat Los Guerreros for the Smackdown tag belts on February 4, 2003 ... Split with Angle in June 2003 and adopted the name The World's Greatest Tag Team ... Benjamin was drafted to Raw in March 2004 and upset Triple-H in his first televised Raw match ... Pinned Ric Flair at Backlash 2004 ... Beat Chris Jericho to win the Intercontinental title at Taboo Tuesday ... Has quietly become one of the most dominant I-C champions in recent memory and has insiders calling him a future world champion.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Pinning Triple-H in his first match on *Raw.* Everyone who was familiar with Benjamin's singles work in OVW knew he had the potential to be a breakout star, but "The Game" took him lightly. As a result, Benjamin embarrassed him and earned the win. Unlike some who have scored surprise wins over Triple-H, Benjamin continued his winning ways the following week and then beat Hunter's mentor, Ric Flair, at Backlash, proving he wasn't going away.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Like most top-notch scientific wrestlers, Benjamin likes to target a body part and work it throughout a match. He tends to focus on the back, weakening opponents with an



Shelton Benjamin gets set to suplex Simon Dean

Shelton
BENJAMIN

array of impressive suplexes. Once Benjamin hits a good snap suplex, Northern Lights suplex, or T-bone variation, he has his opponent right where he wants him. That is when he shines.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Benjamin is a slow starter (unless he's wrestling Maven). He is a cautious wrestler by nature, and it takes him a couple of minutes before he feels totally comfortable in the ring. Those slow first two minutes could be a major problem against seasoned ring generals.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Former world champions. Randy Orton, Shawn Michaels, Kurt Angle, Chris Jericho, Triple-H, JBL. They're all game. Once Benjamin shows he can consistently beat some former world champs, it should only be a matter of time before those coveted world title matches come his way.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Charlie Haas. Maybe Benjamin could beat his former partner, maybe not. But a feud between the two would sour a possible reunion of a team that had a solid claim of truly being The World's Greatest Tag Team. And a loss to Haas could curb his momentum as a world title contender.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A single-leg takedown. The most basic of amateur moves isn't particularly flashy, but it could help him quite a bit. Few wrestlers expect a single-leg shot, and even fewer know how to properly defend against it. Benjamin could use this takedown he mastered back in high school to take challengers off their feet and then begin working submission holds. It would eliminate size advantages and keep opponents on their toes.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Keeping a few tricks in the bag. As a part of Team Angle, Benjamin kept some of the signature moves he developed in OVW in his back pocket, relying on more traditional heel tactics instead of using his aerial skills, roll-through kicks, and suplex variations. Raw competitors who thought they had him scouted when he was drafted to that brand were in for major surprises when Shelton started showing some of his other skills. Just ask Triple-H.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Falling victim to Muhammad Hassan's race-baiting and other vile tactics. Hassan managed to land I-C title matches without really earning them. If Benjamin falls victim to such obvious head games, others will try to play him for a fool.

WE SAID IT:

"Three years ago, everyone was looking at Brock Lesnar and saying he was wrestling's next big thing. Just maybe the real next big thing was Lesnar's tag team partner in OVW. Benjamin looks like a *megastar* on the rise to me."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"Benjamin is an exciting wrestler to watch, but I still don't know a lot about him. He doesn't get a lot of time behind the microphone, and that makes it hard for fans to rally behind him. I hope that changes soon."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"Benjamin stole the show in the big 'Money In The Bank' ladder match at WrestleMania 21. He has just as much potential as Randy Orton and John Cena, if not more. He's certainly a better technical wrestler than either of those two."

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

Trish STRATUS

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'4"
WEIGHT: 125
HOMETOWN: Toronto, Ontario
YEARS PRO: 5
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE women's (6 times), WWE hardcore
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: None
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Woman (2002, 2003, 1st runner-up in 2004), Most Improved (1st runner-up in 2002), Feud (2nd runner-up in 2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Canadian beauty was a leading fitness model when she became interested in a career in wrestling in 1998 ... Signed a WWF deal in November 1999 and was sent to Ron Hutchison to be trained in Toronto ... Debuted as a manager, guiding Test and Albert (T & A) ... Also briefly managed Val Venis ... Feuded with Lita, but didn't show much in the way of in-ring skills ... Became "romantically involved" with Vince McMahon, but the relationship ended soon after Vince forced her to strip and bark like a dog live in the ring on *Raw* and then mocked her ... Decided to seriously train as a wrestler ... Won the vacant women's title by winning a six-woman bout at the 2001 Survivor Series ... Has developed into one of the premier women wrestlers in the U.S. ... Named Diva of the Decade on the *Raw* 10th anniversary special in 2003 ... Beat Victoria and Jazz in an exciting three-way match to regain the women's title at WrestleMania XIX ... A six-time women's champ ... Beat diva search winner Christy Hemme at WrestleMania 21 ... Suffered back injuries at Backlash when she was splashed by Viscera after she berated him for not beating Kane.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Any time a wrestler wins a championship at WrestleMania, it's a career moment. Making WrestleMania XIX even sweeter for Trish was the fact that she was facing her two toughest challengers ever in the same match. She gutted her way to the win and made people forget about her T & A days for good.

STRONGEST PART OF HER MATCHES:

Trish is most dangerous when she's in trouble. That may sound strange, but it's true. When Trish has the upper hand, she tends to berate opponents for too long or get caught tainting the crowd. When she's in danger of losing and scrambling, that's usually when she finds a way to win.

WEAKEST PART OF HER MATCHES:

Trish tires out and gets a bit flustered when her matches go longer than 10 minutes. That rarely hurts her because her matches usually don't go longer than 10 minutes, but it is something she should work on.

WHOM SHE WANTS TO FACE:

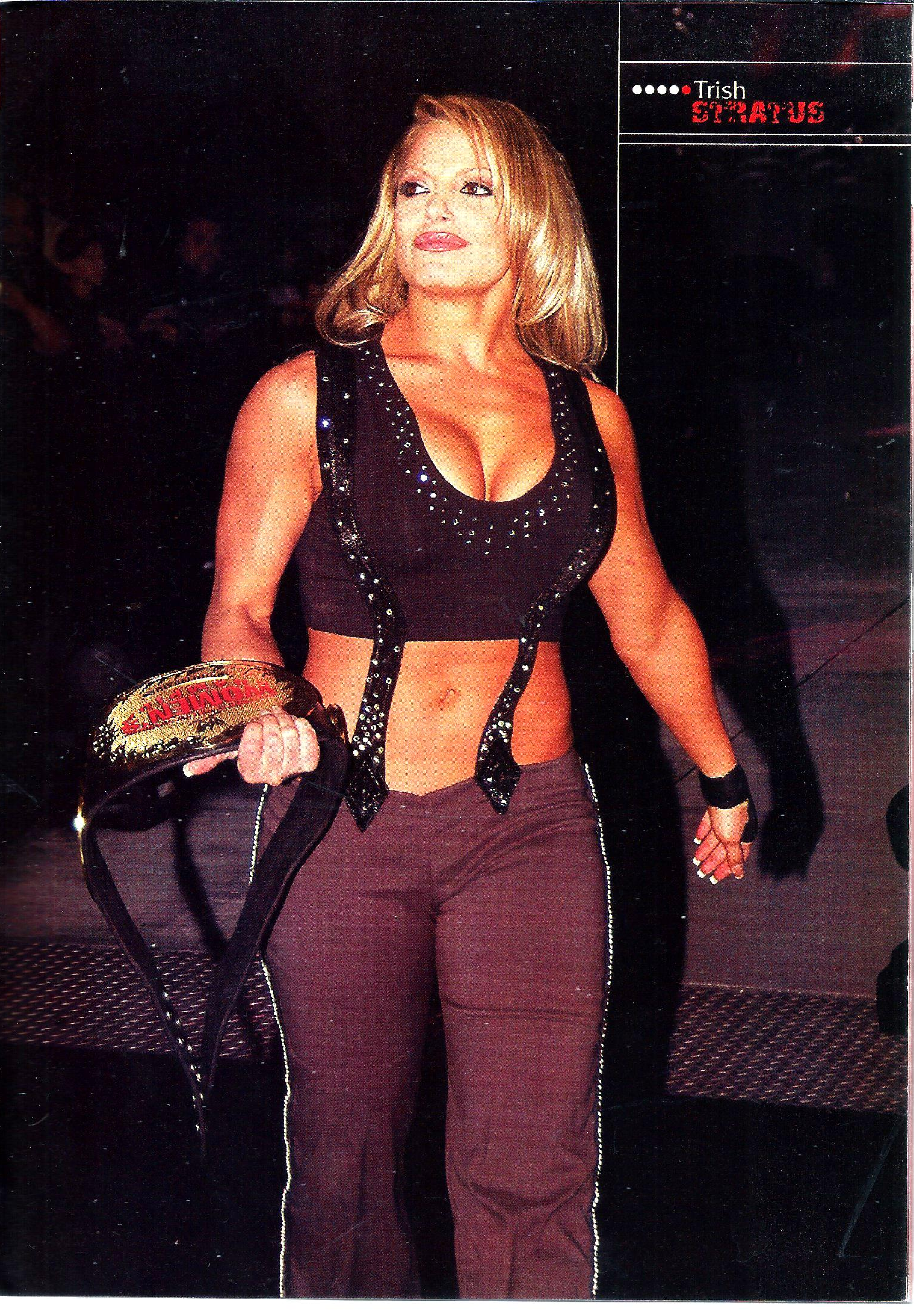
Bring on the Japanese. Ever since the 1980s, Japanese women wrestlers have been afforded far more respect than their American counterparts. Of course, you don't see many Japanese women getting spots on major cards by winning diva searches, either. Trish would love to square off against some of the more accomplished Japanese women and test her skills against the best international competition.

WHOM SHE OUGHT TO AVOID:

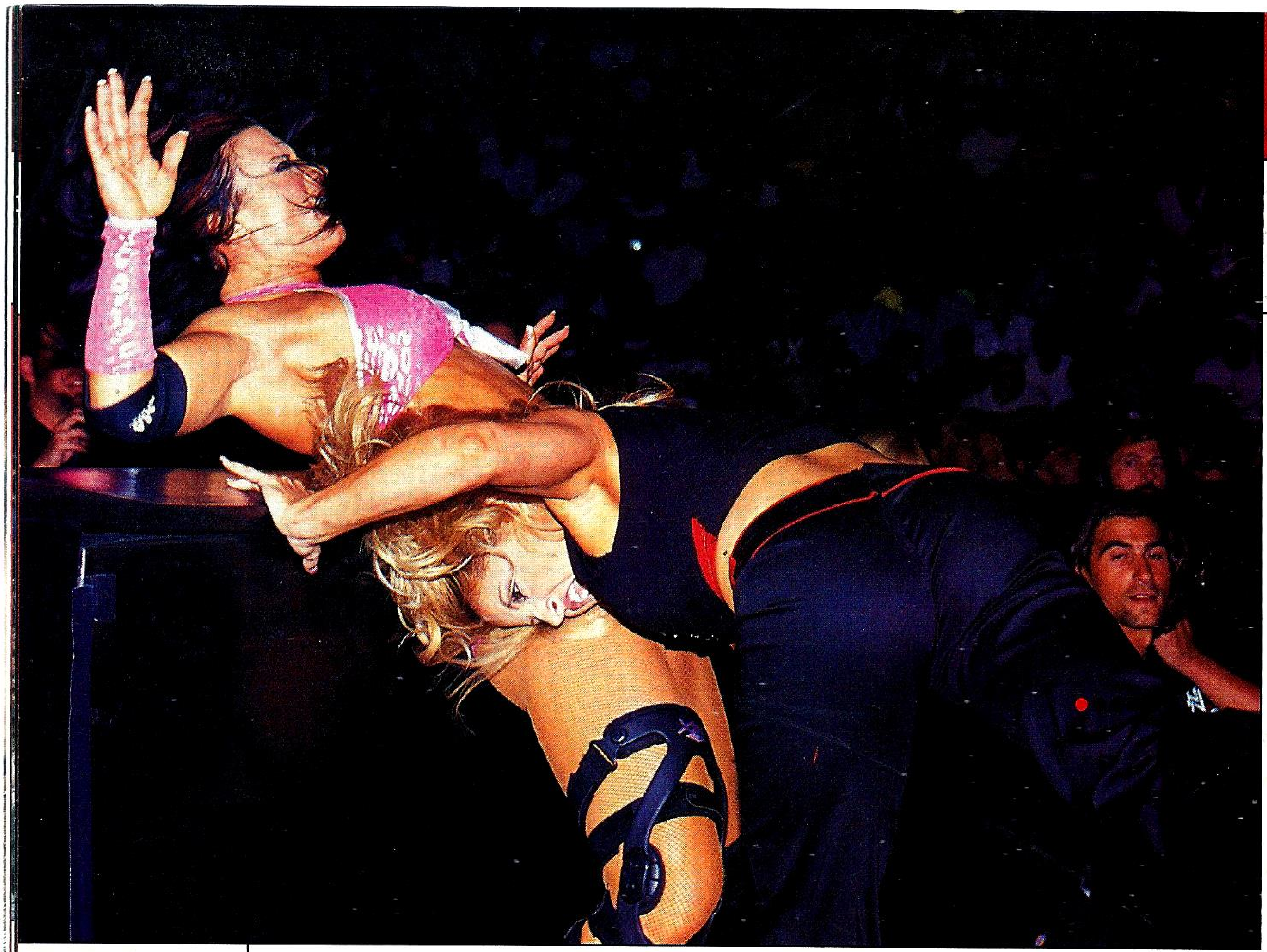
Lita and Victoria. We've all been there and done that countless times. She has little to gain and everything to lose against them.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HER REPERTOIRE:

A Yakuza kick. Trish has her so-called chick kick, and she has the flexibility and bal-



Trish
STRATUS



Trish will do what it takes to beat Victoria (or anyone else)

ance to kick an opponent in the face. But imagine how much power she could generate if she charged her opponent and put that momentum into a running kick to the head? It's a low-risk, high-reward move.

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SMARTEST MOVE SHE EVER MADE:

Turning down *Playboy.* A Trish pictorial in *Playboy* might break the magazine's newsstand sales records and would make her an awful lot of money. But look at what happened to Sable and Chyna once they posed; the fans lost interest. Torrie Wilson and Christy Hemme don't really count since they are bit players, as opposed to Trish who—like Sable and Chyna in the past—is the focal point of the women's division. Trish has kept a certain mystique by never shedding *all* her clothes, and she has retained respect as a wrestler.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE SHE EVER MADE:

Allowing herself to become Mr. McMahon's mid-life crisis. Trish was humiliated by McMahon, who demeaned her in cruel and unusual ways. Fortunately for Trish, she used those embarrassing moments to motivate her to unprecedented success in the women's ranks.

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WE SAID IT:

"Trish's biggest problem is finding worthy contenders with WWE releasing so many good women wrestlers. If she gets bogged down fighting all these rookie divas, her skills are bound to deteriorate."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

"In my opinion, Trish is far and away the premier women wrestler in the business today. It's really incredible to see how much she has improved in just a few short years."

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

"It's funny. During her feud with Christy, Trish kept trying to get the fans to boo her, and I think more people were cheering her than Christy. I think people just recognize her for the talent she is, and a lot of them are going to cheer. Of course, it doesn't hurt that she's a knockout."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

TAJIRI ●●●●●

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VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'7"
WEIGHT: 213
HOMETOWN: Tokyo, Japan
YEARS PRO: 11
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE cruiserweight (3 times), WWE light heavyweight, WWE Raw tag team, WWE Smackdown tag team, WCW U.S., ECW TV, ECW tag team, CMLL light heavyweight, Big Japan junior heavyweight
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 280 in 1997, 155 in 1998, 51 in 1999, 23 in 2000, 27 in 2001, 23 in 2002, 62 in 2003, 42 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Match (3rd runner-up in 2000)

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CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Yoshihiro Tajiri trained to become a wrestler after competing as a kickboxer ... Trained under Kendo Nagasaki and debuted in 1994 for Japan's IWA ... Competed under a mask as Aquarius for EMLL in Mexico ... Battled Dan Severn for the NWA title in 1995 ... Competed in the 1997 New Japan Best of the Super Junior Tournament alongside some of the brightest young stars in Japan ... Competed in Big Japan in 1997 and joined ECW the following year ... ECW feud with Super Crazy produced some of the most exciting matches of the 1990s ... Lost to Tazz in a gory bout for the ECW World title at Heatwave 1999 ... Signed with WWE in 2001 and became Commissioner William Regal's sidekick ... They were comedic gold together ... Got revenge on Tazz with a win at the Invasion pay-per-view in July 2001 ... Found the Midas touch in WWE, winning more gold than most people remember ... Just check his list of major titles won ... Drafted from Smackdown to Raw in March 2004 ... Re-formed his team with Regal and won a Raw tag title with him.

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DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Beating Super Crazy at 1999's ECW Guilty as Charged PPV. The Tajiri-Crazy bout stole the show. Tajiri showed he had

Tajiri's sizing up a target for a kick

TAJIRI

great striking ability, fluid chain wrestling skills, and versatility. He's never been hard up for work since then.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

People tend to think of Tajiri as a comedy wrestler, and he can be quite good in that role. But he might also be the best striker in WWE. His kicks are devastating, and he packs a deceptive amount of power into his punches and chops. Those striking skills have made him a consistently dangerous force.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Tajiri could stand to increase his muscle mass a little. Stronger abdominal muscles and traps could act as shock absorbers and allow him to absorb more punishment. This could help him overcome the weight disadvantage he gives up in most of his matches.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Super Crazy. "The Insane Luchador" was expected to start with WWE by the end of the spring. Tajiri would like nothing better than to give WWE fans a taste of his old ECW style. Maybe more than one taste.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

The cruiserweight division. While Tajiri is a great cruiserweight, he has more potential as a heavyweight tag team wrestler. Going back to the cruiserweight division would be a step backward.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Tajiri doubtlessly studied the Muy Thai style of kickboxing. That style, characterized by hooking an opponent and striking with precision knee attacks, would add another dimension to his game and vastly improve his close-range grappling skills. Opponents looking to avoid knee strikes would stay outside, where he could nail them with roundhouse kicks.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Pairing up with Regal. He and Tajiri have tremendous chemistry, both in the ring and out. Each brings something out in the other.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Awakening the devil in Tazz. In one of the most extreme moments in ECW history, Tazz ripped up Tajiri's mouth with barbed wire in a segment intense enough to be censored on ECW TV. Tajiri only had himself to blame for goading Tazz into a streetfight.

WE SAID IT:

"Another underrated wrestler who just doesn't get his due from a lot of people, including some inside WWE. If Tajiri were in Ring of Honor or TNA, I'm convinced he would be a bigger star. In WWE, he's just another interchangeable wrestler much of the time, and that's unfortunate."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

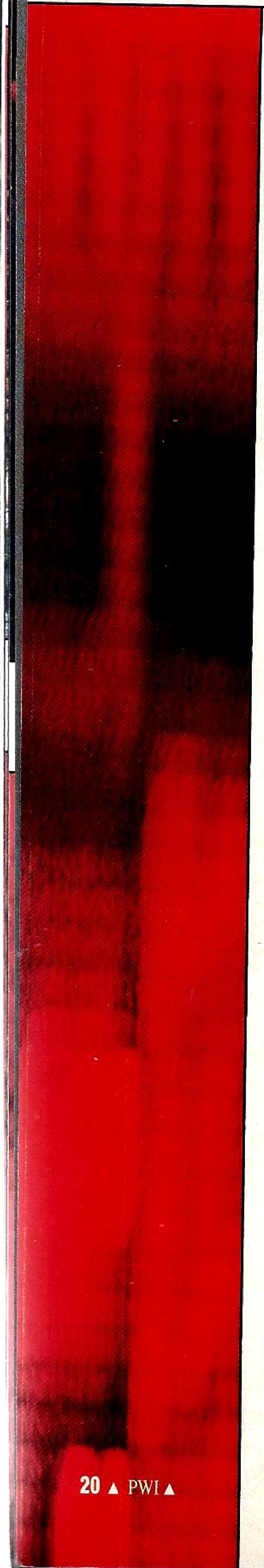
"Tajiri is remarkably versatile for a man who speaks very little English. He is equally adept at wrestling tag matches and singles matches, as a heel or fan favorite, and he has a strange charisma and can be quite funny. That is impressive."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"I think Tajiri is best suited to be a tag team wrestler. He's too small to regularly compete outside of the cruiserweight division. Fortunately, there are plenty of guys who would love to team with him."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

BATISTA



VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'6"
WEIGHT: 318
HOMETOWN: Washington, DC
YEARS PRO: 8
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Raw, WWE Raw tag team (2 times), OVW heavyweight
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 257 in 2001, 28 in 2002, 20 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Most Improved (2nd runner-up in 2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

The laid-back WWE Raw champion might be the hottest property in wrestling now ... Trained by Samoan Afa after being rejected by the WCW Power Plant ... Competed as Kahn in Afa's WXW ... Signed a WWE developmental deal in February 2000 ... Joined OVW as Leviathan and was managed by Synn, who claimed he was a demon she had raised from the deep recesses of the Ohio River ... Beat Doug Basham for the OVW heavyweight title on November 28, 2001 ... Lost the belt to Prototype (John Cena), courtesy of a chloroform-soaked rag supplied by nefarious manager Kenny Bolin ... First appeared on *Smackdown* as Rev. D-Von Dudley's deacon, collecting donations from fans under threat of force ... Abandoned D-Von's dirty ministry and forged out on his own ... Recruited by Ric Flair into Evolution in 2002 ... Suffered a torn biceps in February 2003 ... Teamed with Flair to win the Raw tag title at Armageddon 2003 ... Teamed with Flair and Randy Orton to beat the reunited Rock 'n' Sock Connection at WrestleMania XX ... Dissension between Batista and Triple-H became obvious as 2004 wore on... Batista won the 2005 Royal Rumble and chose to face Triple-H for the Raw title rather than jump to Smackdown ... Beat "The Game" for the belt at WrestleMania 21 and pinned him again at Backlash a month later.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Triple-H had it all planned out. Batista would think JBL was out to get him, and Evolution's "Animal" would jump to Smackdown to pursue Layfield's title. The only problem was that Batista saw the plot unfolding all along. When *Raw* cameras caught Batista chuckling to himself as he eavesdropped on Triple-H's devious schemes, fans realized Batista had outsmarted everyone. It was clear that *Batista* was playing *Hunter,* and fans jumped on his bandwagon.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Batista uses his freakish power to flatten opponents as soon as the bell rings.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Does Batista have the endurance to wrestle 20-plus-minute matches three or four times per week? That's like the age-old question of how many licks it takes to get to the center of a Tootsie Pop. The answer: We might never know. Batista usually has his matches in hand by the 10-minute mark.

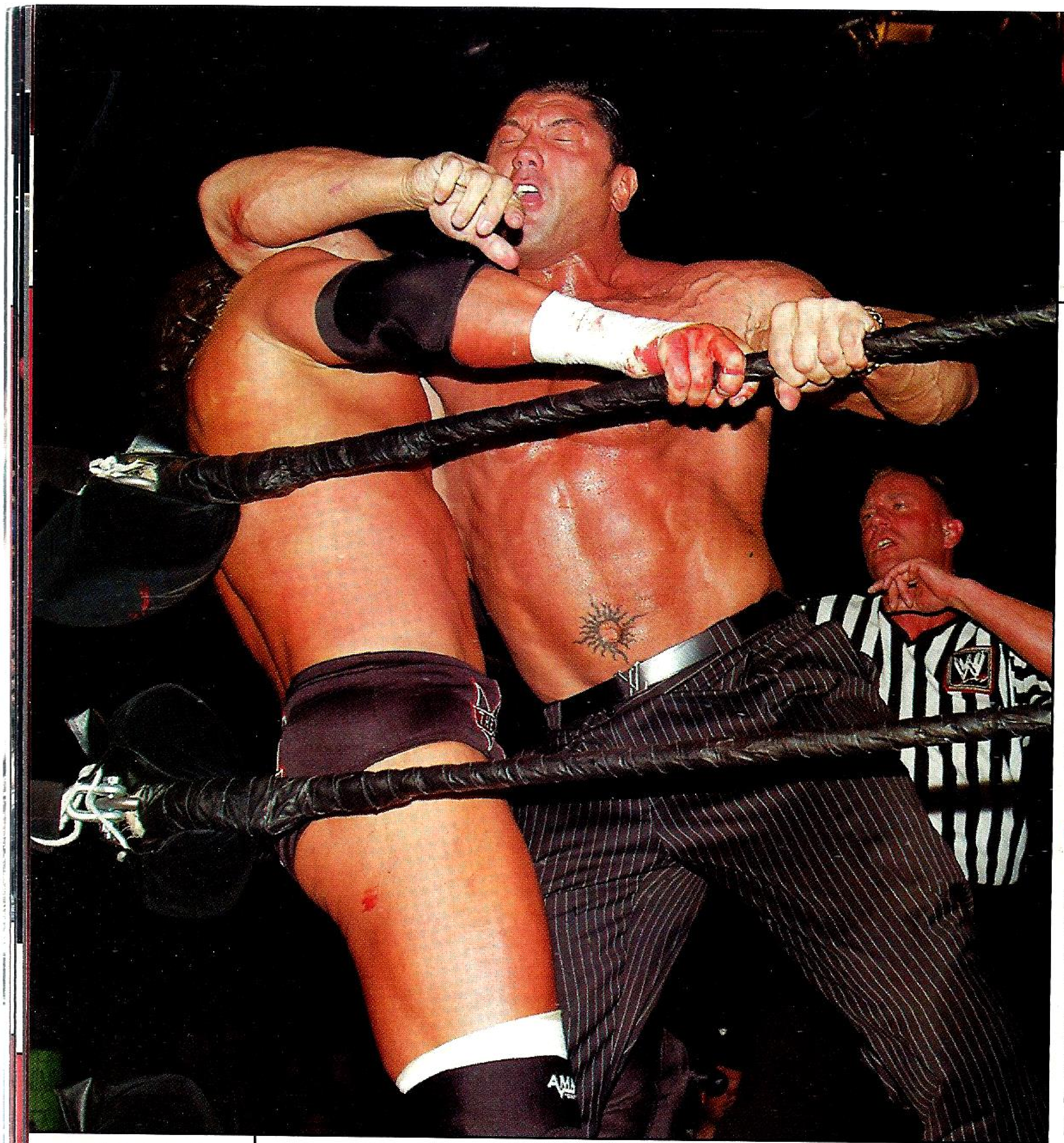
WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Set up the challengers like dominoes, because Batista is ready to knock them down. Now that his personal vendetta against Triple-H has been settled, he's ready to defend against all contenders.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

The Undertaker. As Leviathan, he made a point to call out The Undertaker in his OVW days, and "The Dead Man" taught him a lesson in pain. Despite his cool demeanor, Batista fears Undertaker because he has felt 'Taker's wrath first-hand. He may be the big dog of Raw today, but if The Undertaker ever comes sniffing into his yard, Batista might end up cowering with his tail between his legs.

BATISTA



Batista backs down Triple-H with a mighty elbow

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Who was the Creative genius who looked at Batista and thought, *This guy would make a good deacon for Rev. D-Von Dudley?* If that guy still has a job in WWE, he had better be pushing a mop.

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WE SAID IT:

"Batista is your classic power wrestler with charisma in the same mold as Hulk Hogan and The Ultimate Warrior. But the downside to having all that muscle mass is that it leaves you more susceptible to injury as the muscles pull against tendons and cartilage. I can't see Batista staying at the top and wrestling main event-caliber matches for a sustained period of time without injuring himself."

—*Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz*

"The great thing about Batista is that he is a product of the fans. WWE Creative was planning on pushing Randy Orton to the moon, but the fans got behind Batista instead. It's nice to see that matchmakers still pay attention to the fans from time to time."

—*Senior Writer Harry Burkett*

"What I love about Batista is that he's a throwback wrestler, a tough guy who got into wrestling a little later in life after doing some bouncing and a lot of weightlifting. He's the absolute opposite of the 150-pound chain wrestling indy star. He actually *looks* like a wrestler, and fans respond to that."

—*Senior Writer Dan Murphy*

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A bearhug. Yeah, we realize fans today don't much care for bearhugs. So what! With Batista's incredible upper body strength, it only makes sense for him to wrap those gargantuan arms around his opponents and squeeze the life out of them. The bearhug can be applied at any time, and it always wears down its victim.

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Choosing to stay with Raw and challenging Triple-H at WrestleMania 21. Unlike Randy Orton, Batista didn't wait for Triple-H to turn against him. Instead, he declared war on "The Game," and it made him a superstar.

William REGAL

VITAL STATISTICS

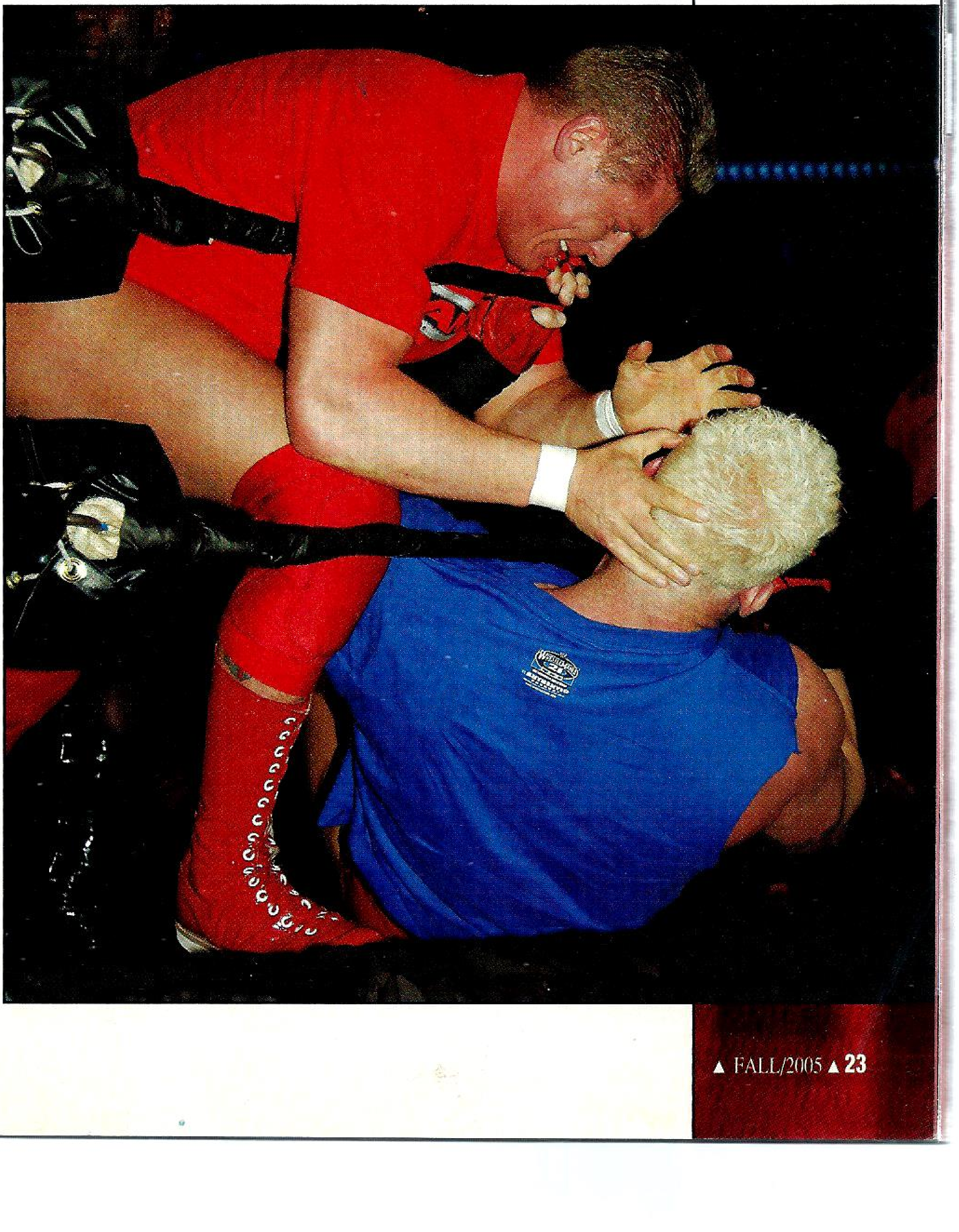
HEIGHT: 6'4"
WEIGHT: 248
HOMETOWN: Blackpool, England
YEARS PRO: 25
MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW TV (4 times), WWE European (3 times), WWE hardcore (3 times), WWE Intercontinental, WWE Raw tag team (4 times)
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 71 in 1993, 18 in 1994, 36 in 1995, 56 in 1996, 97 in 1997, 188 in 1998, 233 in 1999, 222 in 2000, 61 in 2001, 20 in 2002, 67 in 2003
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Comeback (2nd runner-up in 2004), Inspirational (3rd runner-up in 2004), Most Hated (1st runner-up in 2002)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Began his wrestling career at age 15 in Blackpool, England ... Joined WCW full-time as Lord Steven Regal in 1993 ... Beat Rick Steamboat for the TV title that same year ... Held the TV title four times, also beating Larry Zbyszko, Lex Luger, and Ultimo Dragon for the gold ... Joined the WWF in 1998, but his debut was pushed back when he contracted pneumonia ... Briefly competed as "The Man's Man," only to leave the WWF and rejoin WCW in 1999 ... Released by WCW in 2000 in a cost-cutting move ... Had a very serious drug habit that he eventually kicked ... Returned to the WWF as the snobbish William Regal ... Beat Al Snow for the European title in October 2000 ... Became WWF commissioner, but betrayed the company by siding with the Alliance during the Invasion ... Used brass knuckles to beat Edge for the Intercontinental title at the 2002 Royal Rumble ... Won the Raw tag team title twice with Lance Storm ... Sidelined due to a serious heart ailment for much of 2003 .. Returned to reluctantly train/mentor and eventually team with Eugene ... Has a knack for winning tag titles these days ... His autobiography, *Walking A Golden Mile,* should be a great read.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Wrestling Chris Benoit at the 2000 Brian Pillman Memorial Card. Regal impressed everyone who saw him with a technical masterpiece against "The Crippler." He lost the match, but showed the world (particularly WWE) that he still had what it took to com-



William Regal tries to get his mitts on Heidenreich

●●●●● William
REGAL

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pete against the top talent in wrestling. This one match saved his career.

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STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

He may come off as an arrogant blue blood, but Regal is really an accomplished brawler and shootfighter. Coming up through the rough British carnival circuit, Regal learned how to handle himself against the toughest folks in the game. You would definitely want Regal on your side if you were walking down a dark alley in a bad part of town.

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WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Whenever his temper gets the best of him. When Regal is pushed beyond his breaking point, adrenaline will kick in, and he'll usually do some damage with a quick flurry of punches and moves, but a lot of times he'll end up getting a bit disoriented and lose his focus and train of thought and abandon his game plan. That will too often cost him the match.

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WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

John Cena. Is it impossible to picture Regal as a world champion? It is hard, but not impossible. He certainly has the skills to beat the Smackdown champ. He's been in the game for two decades, but you can count the number of world title shots he's had on one hand. It might be time for him to press his luck.

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WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Batista. Well, he shouldn't press his luck *that* much. He doesn't do well against huge power merchants.

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Sir William. Regal's old WCW manager (better known as Bill Dundee) could be a welcome addition. He just might be what Regal needs to contend for a world title. What does he have to lose?

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Sticking to the 15-minute TV title time limit. Back in the mid-1990s, all WCW TV title matches had a 15-minute time limit, unless the champion agreed to waive that in favor of a longer time limit. Regal religiously adhered to that short time limit, and it helped him hold on to the TV belt against some of WCW's top stars. If not for those great TV title reigns, where would Regal be today?

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Joining up with the Alliance during the ill-fated WCW/ECW invasion. Regal became the ultimate fall guy when Team Alliance fell and was forced to become the first member of the infamous Vince McMahon "Kiss My Ass" Club. *Ugh!* What a way to drive home a mistake!

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WE SAID IT:

"Regal is a wrestler's wrestler. Unfortunately, these days it takes more than wrestling ability alone to make it to the top. He doesn't have that extra something."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

"You're probably not going to see Regal wrestle any Match of the Year bouts, but he's not going to stink the place out, either. He's a competent wrestler who understands his role as a mid-card competitor. Plus his comedic skills and timing are vastly underrated. WWE needs more guys like him."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"Regal has had a lot of medical problems in recent years. Maybe it'll soon be time for him to hang up the boots and settle into a role as a manager, commentator, or commissioner. He could be the man to replace Jerry Lawler as the *Raw* color man someday."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

Chris BENOIT

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'10"
WEIGHT: 224
HOMETOWN: Edmonton, Alberta
YEARS PRO: 20
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Raw, WCW World, WWE Raw tag team (2 times), WWE World tag team, WWE Smackdown tag team, WWE Intercontinental (4 times), WCW U.S. (2 times), WCW TV (3 times), WCW World tag team, ECW tag team, IWGP junior heavyweight, Stampede tag team (4 times), Stampede mid-heavyweight (4 times), CWA tag team
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 107 in 1991, 99 in 1992, 44 in 1993, 43 in 1994, 46 in 1995, 18 in 1996, 10 in 1997, 19 in 1998, 20 in 1999, 3 in 2000, 3 in 2001, 13 in 2003, 1 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Wrestler (2004), Match (2004, 1st runner-up in 2004 and in 2003, 3rd runner-up in 2002), Feud (2004, 2nd runner-up in 2001), Rookie (1st runner-up in 1988), Most Improved (1st runner-up in 1996), Tag Team (3rd runner-up, with Kurt Angle, in 2002), Inspirational (1st runner-up in 2004, 3rd runner-up in 2002), Comeback (2nd runner-up in 2002), Most Popular (1st runner-up in 2004), Inspirational (1st runner-up in 2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

"The Crippler" developed his superior technical skills at the Hart family Dungeon and at the New Japan dojo … Cut his teeth in the Stampede territory before touring Japan as Pegasus Kid … Toured Mexico and Germany before signing with WCW in 1993. Despite all of his international experience, he never advanced beyond lower card matches … Won the 1994 Super J Cup, beating Gedo, Great Sasuke, and Black Tiger (Eddie Guerrero) … Arrived in ECW in 1995 and was part of the original Triple Threat with Shane Douglas and Dean Malenko … After an unsuccessful tryout with the WWF, rejoined WCW and became a member of The Four Horsemen … Beat Jeff Jarrett in a ladder match for the U.S. title at Starrcade 1999 … Finally won a world title, pinning Sid Vicious at Souled Out 2000 … However, Benoit returned the belt backstage and left for the WWF. On *Nitro* the following night, WCW management explained that Vicious' foot was under the ropes when Benoit won the match, nullifying the title change … Debuted on *Raw* with fellow WCW ex-patriots Guerrero, Malenko, and Perry Saturn … Won his first title in the WWF at WrestleMania XVI, grabbing the Intercontinental championship in a triangle match with Kurt Angle and Chris Jericho … Appeared to beat The Rock for the WWF title on two pay-per-views, only to have the matches restarted and Rock score the wins, making it look like Benoit would never enjoy a world title reign … The four-time I-C champion won the 2004 Royal Rumble to earn a title shot and opted to face Raw's Triple-H … Won the Raw title in 2004's Match of the Year against "The Game" and Shawn Michaels at WrestleMania XX … Reigned until SummerSlam, at which he was beaten by Randy Orton.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Celebrating amidst the falling confetti with his family as the new Raw champion as WrestleMania XX went off the air.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

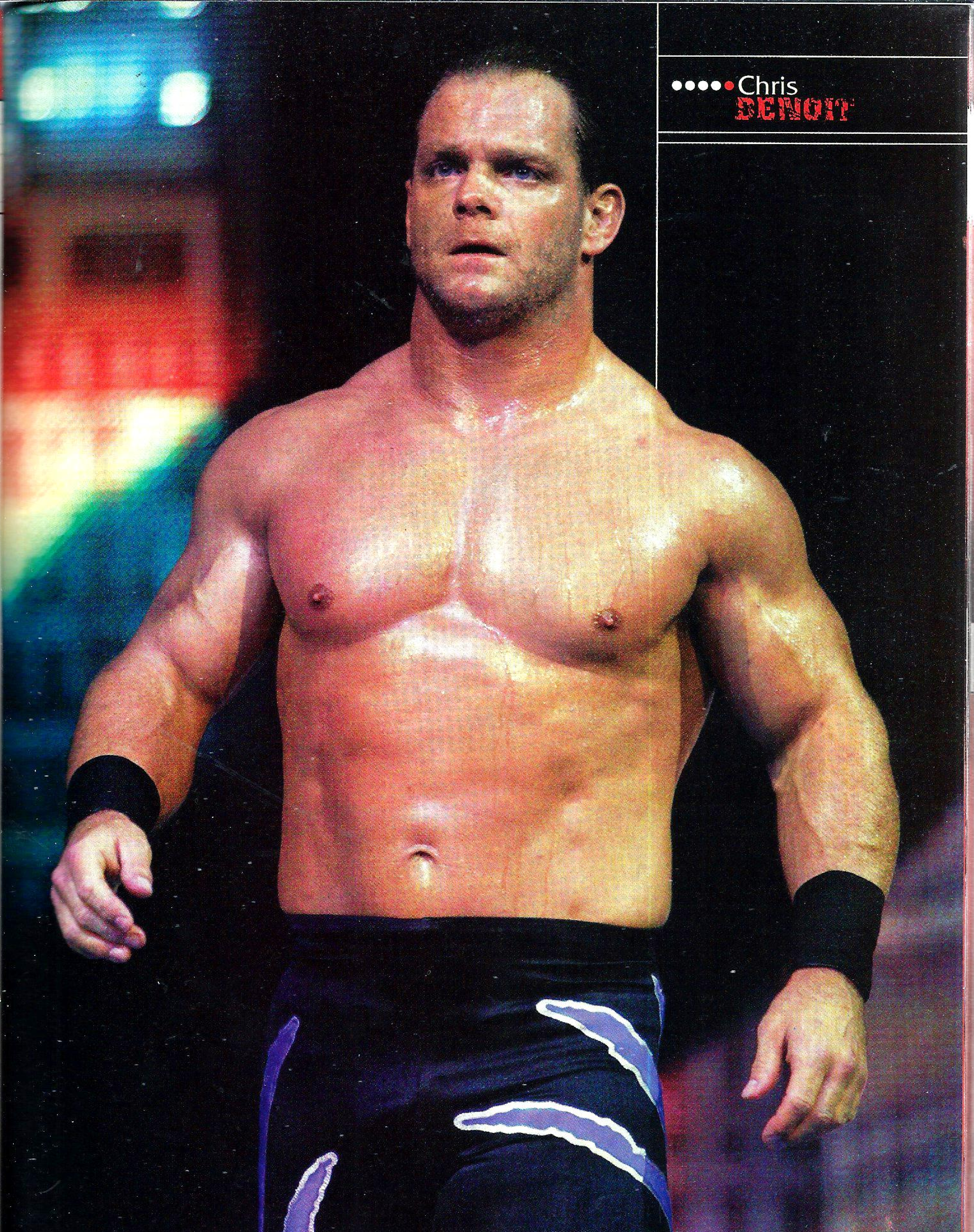
Unmatched intensity. Benoit is so focused and intense that he could probably ignite a candle on the other side of the room just by glaring at it.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Obsessive compulsive need to hit the swan dive headbutt. Even when he connects, it usually hurts him as much as his opponent. Why not just lock on the crossface and end the match without the risk?

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Anyone with a world title belt.



Chris
BENOIT

Chris Benoit puts Edge away with a sharpshooter

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Anyone without a world title belt. Benoit is at a critical crossroads. Either he can allow himself to be moved out of the title picture, or he can make a stand and assert himself. Has he lost his drive after winning the title last year? Did that dull his killer instinct?

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A cornerman. Benoit is frequently a victim of outside interference. A good manager, agent, or trainer could prevent that. Hey, why do you think Bob Backlund had Arnold Skoaland in his corner?

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Walking out of WCW moments after winning the World title. Even though he had won the WCW championship, Benoit had the foresight to see he didn't have much of a future there. Leaving for the WWF was a risk—Vince McMahon could have buried him to show WCW wrestlers weren't as good as WWF wrestlers, or WCW could have won the Monday night wars and put the WWF out of business. Instead, the defection of Benoit and The Radicals tilted the Monday night wars in the WWF's favor for good, and Benoit has never looked back.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Professionally, getting romantically involved with Kevin Sullivan's wife wasn't a smart career choice. But Chris and Nancy are still together and happy eight years later, so it turned out for the best (although maybe not for Sullivan).

WE SAID IT:

"Kevin Nash once referred to Chris Benoit as a 'vanilla midget,' meaning he was too small and bland to make a major impact. I wonder if Nash was watching WWE in 2004. Benoit gave 'Big Sexy' something to think about."

—*Senior Writer Will Welsh*

"Some people actually got teary-eyed when Benoit made Triple-H tap out at WrestleMania XX. It just seemed like he had the worst luck in wrestling and never got a chance to excel. He got that at WrestleMania XX, and it was one of the most fulfilling moments in WrestleMania history. It moved people that much."

—*Senior Writer Harry Burkett*

"Benoit may have lost the Raw title, but there's still plenty more he can accomplish. He could easily move to Smackdown and compete for that world title and maybe even rekindle his explosive relationship with Kurt Angle. He may not have a belt right now, but Benoit is still at the peak of his career."

—*Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker*

Chris JERICHO

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'10"
WEIGHT: 225
HOMETOWN: Winnipeg, Manitoba
YEARS PRO: 15
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE World, WCW World (2 times), WWE Intercontinental (7 times), WWE World tag team (3 times), WCW cruiserweight (4 times), ECW TV, WCW TV, WWE European, WWE hardcore, WAR international junior heavyweight, WAR junior heavyweight tag team, RMW Canadian mid-heavyweight, NWA middleweight, WWA tag team, WCWA tag team (2 times), RMW Canadian heavyweight
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 42 in 1996, 26 in 1997, 10 in 1998, 29 in 1999, 9 in 2000, 9 in 2001, 4 in 2002, 5 in 2003, 10 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Most Hated (2002), Most Popular (2nd runner-up in 2001 and in 2000), Match (1st runner-up in 2000, 2nd runner-up in 2001, 3rd runner-up in 2003), Inspirational (1st runner-up in 2001), Feud (2nd runner-up in 2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Trained at the Hart Brothers Wrestling Camp in Calgary and debuted in 1990 ... Teamed with Lance Storm as The Thrillseekers in Calgary and later in Smoky Mountain Wrestling ... Made several successful tours of Mexico as Corazon de Leon ("Lion Heart"), and that Lucha Libre influence is obvious in his matches today ... After touring Japan, he landed in ECW and won the TV title ... Joined WCW as a fan favorite in August 1997 but soon turned heel, going so far as to smash Rey Misterio Jr.'s knee with a toolbox at Souled Out 1998 ... Although he was a villain, Jericho's hysterical promos and obese bodyguard, Ralphus, earned him a cult fan following ... Fed up with the political situation in WCW, he departed for the WWF in the summer of 1999, declaring that Y2J (not Y2K) was upon us ... Won his first Intercontinental title at Armageddon 1999 and has gone on to wear that title belt an unprecedented seven times ... Made wrestling history by beating WCW World champion The Rock and WWF World champion Steve Austin to unify the two championships at Vengeance 2001 ... Lost the unified title to Triple-H in the main event of WrestleMania X8 ... Beat Kevin Nash in a match in which Nash agreed to cut his hair if he lost ... He and Christian played mind games with Trish Stratus and Lita, but Jericho showed he had a heart after all and repented ... Too bad Stratus had no mercy on him ... After more than a year of walking the straight and narrow, Y2J is showing signs of a heel turn and targeting Shelton Benjamin's I-C title.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Walking out of Vengeance 2001 as wrestling's first unified world champion in more than 40 years. The fact that Vince McMahon had bought WCW and that the promotion had ceased to exist in a practical sense took a little

The Walls of Jericho usually do the trick for Y2J

•••••Chris **JERICHO**

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bit of luster off the significance of Jericho's win, but Y2J will always be able to say he did something no one else had ever done.

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STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Good defensive instincts. Maybe it was those years taking hard bumps in those stiff Mexican rings. Jericho can roll through most slams and falls and protect himself from injury, which allows him to take some otherwise-dangerous spills and get back to his feet unharmed.

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WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Sloppy rallies. When Jericho rallies after taking a beating, he tends to use the same fallback moves—the bulldog, the Asai moonsault, the dropkick to the apron. The problem is, Jericho rushes to use all of his signature moves, and oftentimes, he gets less impact than he planned. For example, he would get much more force on his bulldog if he gripped his opponent's head by his armpit and dropped to the canvas instead of merely palming his opponent's head. If he slowed down a bit, he'd win more matches.

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WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

John Cena. A move to Smackdown and a feud with the champ could be huge.

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WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Shelton Benjamin. Really, does he need an *eighth* Intercontinental title? He's proved he can succeed at that level. Now he needs to move back up to world title contention.

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Unpredictability. Back in WCW, you never knew what he was going to say when he grabbed a microphone. Now, most of his promos sound the same.

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Jumping from WCW to the WWF. For months, Jericho complained about a glass ceiling in WCW and claimed he would never get the opportunity to rise above mid-card level in a company dominated by Hulk Hogan and the NWO. Then Jericho made his WWF debut opposite none other than The Rock, giving him a taste of the main event that he never experienced in WCW. A great move that paid immediate dividends.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Getting drawn into a feud with Chyna. His WWF debut saw him trading barbs with The Rock. Then, suddenly, he was struggling against a woman. The Chyna feud set back his career a year.

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WE SAID IT:

"Jericho is in a great position. He has a strong fan following, plenty of women fans, and has already achieved all of his goals in this sport. He seems to be wrestling more for fun these days than anything, and that must be a good situation to be in."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"It hardly seems like Jericho's heart is totally in wrestling these days. His band, Fozzy, is doing okay for itself. He does a boatload of guest spots on VH-1, and he spends a lot of time doing his 'Highlight Reel.' That's good for him, but it makes me think he's not concerned about ever winning another world title."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Jericho is at his best when he's breaking the rules, and I think he knows it deep down. I like this new streak of arrogance he's displaying with Shelton Benjamin. He may be on the verge of another run at a world championship."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

CHRISTIAN

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 225
HOMETOWN: Toronto, Ontario
YEARS PRO: 10
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Intercontinental (3 times), WWF light heavyweight, WWE hardcore, ECWA heavyweight (2 times), WWE World tag team (8 times), WWE Raw tag team, ICW streetfight tag team
***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 90 in 1999, 57 in 2000, 29 in 2001, 47 in 2002, 28 in 2003, 31 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Match (2001, 2000, 2nd runner-up in 2000), Feud (2nd runner-up in 2004, 3rd runner-up in 2001 and in 2000), Tag Team (1st runner-up, with Edge, in 2000), Most Hated (1st runner-up in 2002)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Trained under Sweet Daddy Siki and Ron Hutchison in Toronto ... Formed a tag team with childhood friend Edge ... They enjoyed success in Canada and Michigan ... Won the ECWA heavyweight title in 1998 ... Signed with the WWF and joined Gangrel's Brood along with Edge ... Captured the World tag team title in a Match of the Year classic at WrestleMania XVI ... Edge and Christian feuded with the Hardys and The Dudley Boys throughout 2000 and 2001 ... Turned against Edge at a September 2001 *Raw* event in their hometown ... Beat his former partner for the Intercontinental title at Unforgiven 2001 ... Joined the ECW/WCW Alliance, then later formed an evil alliance with Lance Storm, William Regal, and Test known as The Un-Americans ... Began teaming with Chris Jericho ... Won two more Intercontinental titles ... Got the last laugh on Jericho when Trish Stratus turned against Y2J and joined forces with the CLB at WrestleMania XX ... Signed Tyson Tomko as his "problem solver" ... With Tomko at his side, he has become even more obnoxious—if that were possible.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Turning against Edge in 2001. The Edge-Christian feud was a slow boil, but when it finally exploded, it erupted in an explosion of pent-up violence. Christian struck out against his long-time partner in their hometown of Toronto of all places and set off on his own career path. It took a while, but he finally escaped Edge's shadow.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Christian has a sound strategy. He's always playing mind games. He irritates opponents before the match and before the opening bell. Then he uses a cunning combination of precision attacks. heel tactics, and generous outside interference in hopes of coming out on top. That doesn't happen by accident. That is the game plan he has developed, and he executes it to perfection on his best nights.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Over-reliance on problem solvers. For some reason, Christian always seems loathe to push himself and surrounds himself with cronies to interfere whenever he is in trouble. First it was Edge and Gangrel, then the Alliance, then The Un-Americans, then Trish Stratus, and now it's Tomko. The problem is that Christian always ends up splitting with those "friends" at some point. If he just honed his skills a bit more, he wouldn't need others running interference for him.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

John Cena. Christian could use a change of scenery. A move to Smackdown could make him a prime contender to Cena's world title.

••••• CHRISTIAN

Christian isn't afraid to take it to Shelton Benjamin

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Ric Flair. Christian made the mistake of challenging Flair on two successive *Raw* episodes in May (though he pulled a bait-and-switch and sent Tomko out the first time). At this stage of his career, Flair is a poor opponent to face if you have world title aspirations. A win over Flair today means relatively little. After all, he isn't even a full-time competitor. But a loss, or several losses, could do irreparable damage to Christian's title quest.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

The figure-four leglock. Looks great as either a finisher or a wear-down hold.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Stealing Trish from Jericho at WrestleMania XX. Very few saw Trish's heel turn coming, least of all Jericho, who was so blinded by puppy love that he walked right into Christian's trap.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Underestimating the unstoppable force of Gillberg. That's right, Christian has the unfortunate distinction of being the man who lost the WWF light heavyweight title to the former Duane Gill. How much ribbing do you think he took for that in the locker room?

WE SAID IT:

"Christian is an extremely versatile competitor. He seems as comfortable against top tier wrestlers as he is against lower-card competitors. He is one of WWE's most valuable, though underrated, wrestlers."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"It can be easy to take Christian for granted since he has been around for so long, but 'Captain Charisma' just continues to become more and more entertaining. His segments are my favorite part of most *Raw* telecasts."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"Christian's attempt to outrap John Cena at the Royal Rumble was a classic moment. Christian has plenty of personality. I think a jump to Smackdown would be a fantastic move for him. He could feud with Cena and maybe even get a world title shot or two."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

EUGENE

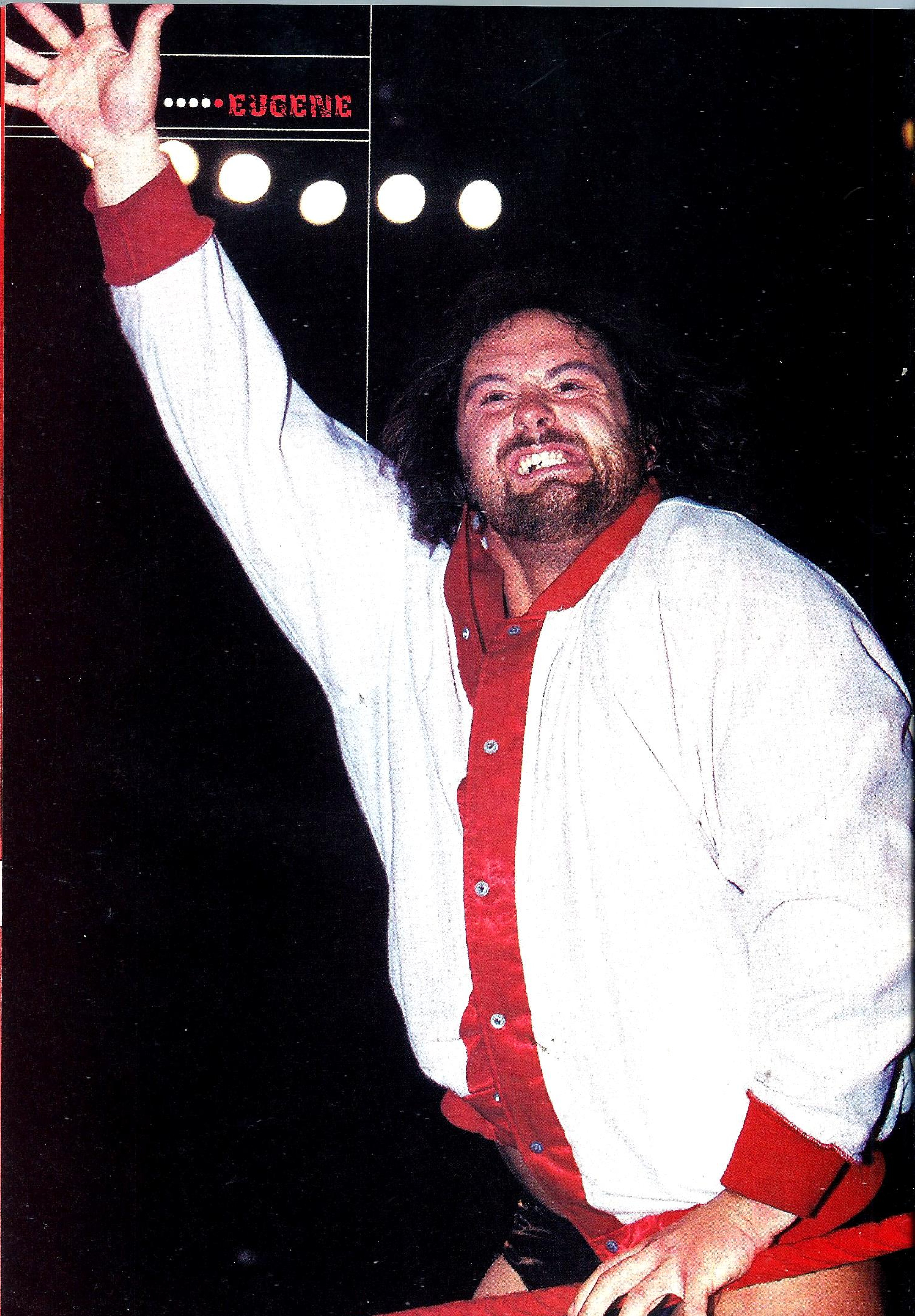
VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'
WEIGHT: 226
HOMETOWN: Jeffersonville, IN
YEARS PRO: 8
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Raw tag team, OVW heavyweight (8 times), OVW Southern tag team (9 times), HWA heavyweight
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 218 in 2000, 182 in 2001, 100 in 2002, 68 in 2003, 21 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Most Popular (3rd runner-up in 2004), Inspirational (2nd runner-up in 2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Made his pro debut as Nick Dinsmore in 1997 after being trained by Danny Davis … Teamed with Rob Conway as The Lords of the Ring, winning the OVW Southern tag belts nine times from 1998 through 2002 … Won the OVW heavyweight title for the first time by beating Rip Rogers on June 3, 1998 … Dinsmore went on to become one of the most prolific wrestlers in OVW, winning the heavyweight title a record eight times … Known as "Mr. Wrestling" for his technical prowess … Debuted on *Raw* in March 2004 as Eugene, Eric Bischoff's mentally challenged nephew … Bischoff ordered William Regal to mentor him, but the two became friends … Was wooed by Triple-H, who used him as a pawn, culminating in a one-sided bout at SummerSlam 2004 … Beat Uncle Eric at Taboo Tuesday and shaved Bischoff's head … Suffered a ruptured patella tendon at New Year's Revolution, but that didn't stop him from having a WrestleMania moment, posing with Hulk Hogan at WrestleMania 21.

Eugene steals from Chris Benoit's playbook



DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Teaming with William Regal to win the Raw tag belts in November 2004. With that match, Eugene went from being a novelty act to being a legitimate title contender. He also showed his title-winning ways could extend to WWE.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Unpredictability. No one knows what he's going to get when facing Eugene. Will an opponent see the scientific skills that earned him the nickname "Mr. Wrestling" a lifetime ago? Or will Eugene be clowning around and copying moves from stars of the past? Only Eugene knows for sure (maybe).

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Dinsmore is more of a wrestler than a bodybuilder. He tends to put on a little bit of a paunch, and that might be even more pronounced now, as his knee injury has likely prevented him from working out as much as he'd like to. An extra 10 or 15 pounds around the middle could hurt his stamina.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

The tag team champions. Once he returns, Eugene is likely to re-form his team with Regal and get back on the title track. It doesn't matter who has the belts—those are the guys Eugene wants to face.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Triple-H. "The Game" handed Eugene the worst loss and some of the worst beatings of his career. There's no need to revisit that experience anytime soon.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

The sharpshooter. Eugene (and Nick Dinsmore) was a huge fan of Bret Hart. Adding this hold to his arsenal would be a nice way of paying homage to the "Hitman," and it would also give him another weapon he could use to fluster opponents.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Playing dumb. Nick Dinsmore sat in OVW for years, watching as wrestler after wrestler got that coveted WWE callup. Some said Dinsmore didn't have the look that attracts front office attention. So Dinsmore gave himself a drastic makeover. Next thing he knew, he was facing Triple-H at SummerSlam. Not a bad move at all.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Trusting Triple-H, even for a moment. Eugene must have been thrilled when Ric Flair and Triple-H showed interest in him. If he were thinking clearly, he probably would have realized it was a trap all along. He learned a violent and painful lesson.

WE SAID IT:

"It's going to be interesting to see how long of a shelf life the Eugene character has. Eugene has been enormously popular since he joined WWE, but what happens when the novelty of a 'special' wrestler wears off?"

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

"Eugene is a great grappler, and believe it or not, he actually has a good head on his shoulders. If he can stay healthy, he could have a major impact in WWE over the next few years."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"Eugene is definitely best suited to being a tag team wrestler. His unorthodox style and vast technical skills complement several other styles and should always make him a sought-after partner."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

EDGE

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'4"
WEIGHT: 240
HOMETOWN: Toronto, Ontario
YEARS PRO: 11
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Intercontinental, (5 times), WWE World tag team (8 times), WWE Raw tag team (2 times), WWE Smackdown tag team, WCW U.S., ICW streetfight tag team
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 254 in 1997, 67 in 1998, 83 in 1999, 51 in 2000, 20 in 2001, 7 in 2002, 34 in 2003, 59 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Tag Team (1st runner-up in 2000), Match (2001, 2000, 2nd runner-up in 2000, 3rd runner-up in 2002), Feud (1st runner-up in 2002, 3rd runner-up in 2001 and in 2000), Most Improved (2001), Comeback (2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Got into wrestling when he won an essay contest to earn tuition to Ron Hutchison's wrestling school in Toronto ... Teamed with Joe E. Legend as Sex and Violence ... Also began teaming with Christian Cage as High Impact ... Team changed its name to The Suicide Blonds ... Debuted in the WWF as a brooding loner in 1998 ... With Christian, joined Gangrel's goth Brood faction ... Scored a surprise win over Jeff Jarrett for the Intercontinental title in his hometown on July 24, 1999, but lost the belt back to "Double-J" the following night ... He and Christian survived an intense three-way ladder match to win the tag belts at WrestleMania 2000 ... Also won three-way TLC matches against the Dudleys and Hardys at SummerSlam 2000 and WrestleMania X7 ... Went on to win those tag belts seven times together ... Won the 2001 King of the Ring Tournament ... Split with Christian in a nasty feud and went on to win four more I-C titles ... Won the WWE World tag championship with childhood hero Hulk Hogan in July 2002 ... Underwent neck surgery in March 2003 and was out of action for one year ... Returned to Raw itching for a world title shot ... Turned heel in 2005 ... Won the WrestleMania 21 "Money In The Bank" ladder match to earn a future world title match ... Also won Raw's Gold Rush Tournament when Lita turned against Kane to join him in May 2005 ... At the top of his game and ready for the main event.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Edge really had everything to lose in his hair vs. hair match against Kurt Angle at Judgment Day 2002. Where would Edge be without his flowing blond locks? But he brought his "A" game and handed the former WWE World champion and Olympic gold medallist the most humiliating loss of his career. When did Edge truly go from being a tag-team specialist to a legitimate singles wrestler? Look no further than this match.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

It takes Edge a few minutes to get his groove on, but he has a great transitional game and can take over at any time. His spear and Edge-a-cution are a formidable one-two punch.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Far too often, Edge telegraphs his spear or argues with the referee, wasting valuable time and allowing his opponent to recover. Edge has to learn that it doesn't pay to argue with officials. If he gets a two-count, he needs to follow up right away instead of running his mouth.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Edge wants world title matches. It doesn't really matter if it's for the Raw or Smackdown title. Give him a champion and Edge will show up for the fight of his life.

EDGE

Edge weakens the weakened arm of Chris Benoit

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Professionally speaking, signing Lita as his manager was brilliant. Getting romantically involved wasn't (see below). She gives him a fresh edge and is willing to interfere and lend a helping hand if necessary.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Edge was a married man when he hooked up with Lita. Not only did he likely ruin his second marriage, but he lost his legion of Edge-heads in the process. Really, was it worth it?

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Christian. They go back a long way. That's all well and good, but they need to steer clear of each other professionally. As one of the most decorated teams in WWE history, they will forever be compared to each other, and that means one of them will always be considered an underachiever. Stay friends behind the scenes if you must, but don't let the rigors of the ring ruin your friendship.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A huracanrana. Hey, Lita can do it, so why not Edge? Seriously, it could be an interesting setup move. Lita could show him how it's done.

WE SAID IT:

"Edge is on a roll, but I think he'd do much better with Smackdown than Raw. If he gets sent to Smackdown with the title shots he has already earned, I think Edge could be the Smackdown champion by SummerSlam."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

"A very good wrestler. Looks like he's a lousy human being, though."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"There's an intangible element that Edge has always seemed to be missing. He's a talented wrestler, but he just can't make that big step to the main event level. If Lita doesn't get him there, he might as well give up."

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

Matt HARDY ●●●●●

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VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 213
HOMETOWN: Cameron, NC
YEARS PRO: 11

MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE cruiserweight, WWE World tag team (5 times), WCW World tag team, WWE European, WWE hardcore, NFWA heavyweight, NCW heavyweight, OMEGA heavyweight, OMEGA tag team, NWA 2000 tag team, NDW light heavyweight

"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 208 in 1998, 100 in 1999, 45 in 2000, 22 in 2001, 25 in 2002, 17 in 2003, 39 in 2004

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Tag Team (2000, 1st runner-up in 1999, 2nd runner-up in 2001), Match (2001, 2000, 2nd runner-up in 2000), Feud (3rd runner-up in 2000 and 2004), Most Improved (1st runner-up in 2003)

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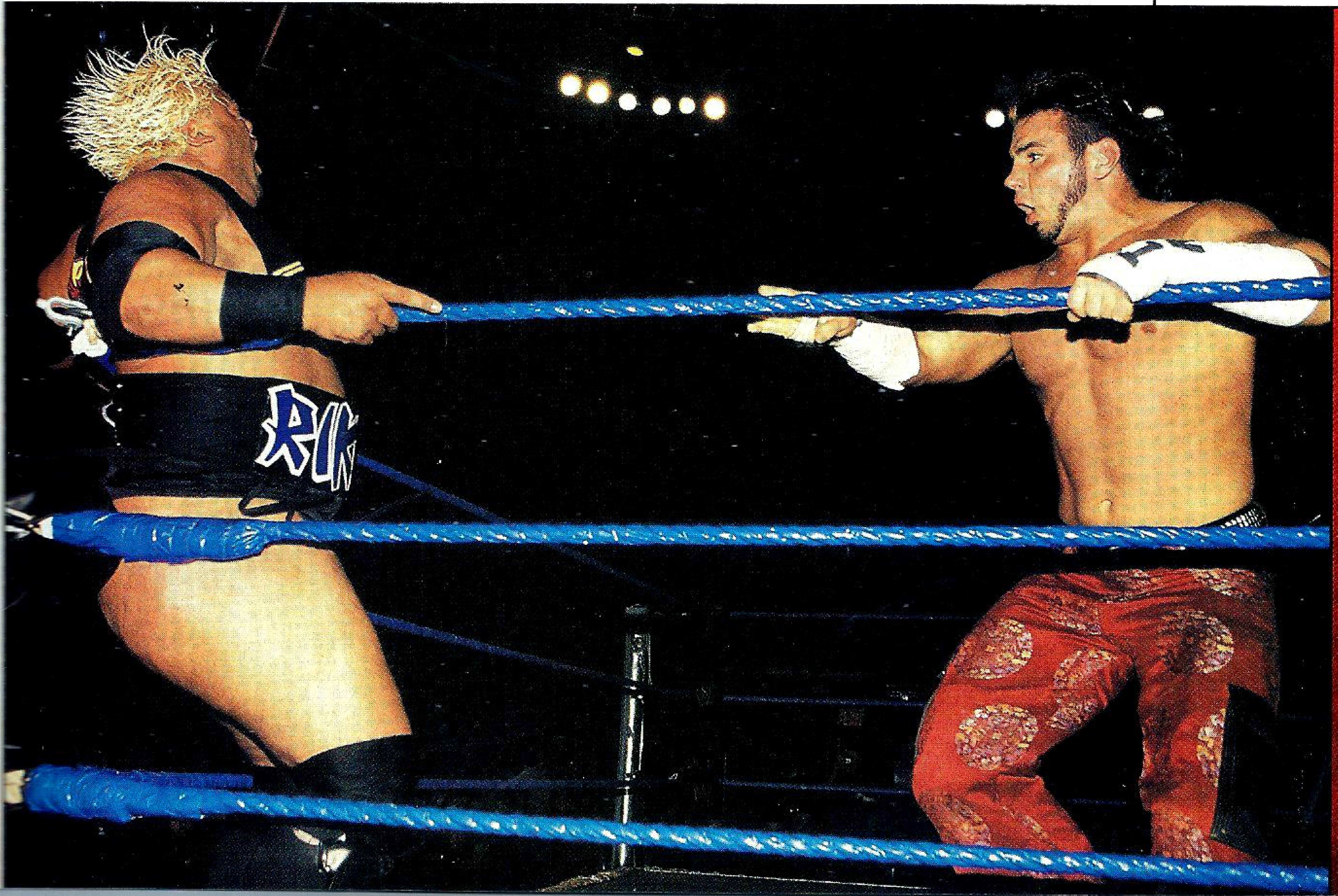
CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Began wrestling in his teens on the Carolina indy scene ... Competed as The Wolverine in the NEWA, High Voltage in the NFWA, and Surge in OMEGA Pro ... Invited to a WWF training camp headed by Dory Funk Jr. in the summer of 1998 ... Matt and brother Jeff debuted in the WWF as an unheralded preliminary team and didn't fare well at all at first ... Briefly managed by Michael Hayes a few years later ... Won the World tag team title on June 29, 1999 ... Also briefly managed by Gangrel and by Terri Runnels ... The brothers signed Lita as their manager in 2000, and romance bloomed between her and Matt ... The brothers held the WWF tag belts a total of five times from 1999 through 2001 ... Beat Eddie Guerrero for the European title ... Joined Smackdown in 2002 as a heel, starting the Mattitude era ... Held the cruiserweight title for more than three months in 2003 ... Later moved back to Raw so he could be with Lita ... Was released from WWE in a controversial move a few months ago, following a breakup with Lita ... Has agreed to at least one date with Ring of Honor and is expected to sign with TNA when his WWE non-compete clause expires.

Hardy might know a few folks he'd like to stinkface



●●●●●Matt
HARDY

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Successfully defending the cruiserweight championship against Rey Misterio Jr. at WrestleMania XIX. Misterio has long been considered the premier cruiserweight wrestler in the U.S., but Hardy managed to eke out a win over the masked superstar on the grandest stage in the sport. Certainly a great moment in Mattitude.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Hardy uses a rope-a-dope sort of offense. Opponents sometimes don't take him seriously. Hardy knows this and sometimes allows his opponents to get the upper hand for the first moment. Hardy uses this time to figure out what his opponent's game plan is and what to expect, then cuts off the man's offense and attempts to take over.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Inability to fight from behind. Hardy gets overwhelmed by bigger, stronger foes. Once he loses the advantage, he tends to get overwhelmed.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

A.J. Styles and Christopher Daniels—and he will. Hardy is the hottest free agent on the market today. Most observers expect him to sign with TNA any day now, and he could immediately become a major force by upending either Styles or Daniels to claim the heavyweight or X title.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Austin Aries, C.M. Punk, Homicide, and Samoa Joe. A ROH run and some big paydays might seem be tempting to him, but Hardy has to realize a loss to one of these hungry (and very talented) ROH regulars will remove a lot of his luster overnight. Hardy will be a marked man in ROH, and a decisive early loss could kill his momentum and marketability.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A new Mattitide Follower. Shannon Moore was gold in the role of the wannabe Matt Hardy. He also helped Hardy win some matches he otherwise might have lost. It's always good to have someone watching your back.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Being candid online. By discussing personal and professional matters on his personal Web site, Hardy endeared himself to online fans and earned sympathy that will translate into fan support.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Being candid online. Hardy's outspokenness probably cost him his job in WWE.

WE SAID IT:

"Unlike Jeff, Matt isn't tainted with the perception of being a WWE castoff. Instead, many hardcore fans respect him for speaking his mind and see him as being victimized by WWE. He could succeed where Jeff failed and become the hot star TNA so desperately needs."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"Matt Hardy is definitely the buzz of the moment, but he'll have to prove he's worthy of all the hype when he joins TNA. He's going to be under more pressure than ever to prove he can be a top star. But I think he's mentally ready for that challenge."

—Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz

"Matt can be a valuable addition to TNA or any other promotion that brings him on board. It's almost impossible to find another wrestler as young as he is with as much big match experience as Hardy brings to the table."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

RHYNO ●●●●●

●●●●● VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'10"
WEIGHT: 275
HOMETOWN: Detroit, MI
YEARS PRO: 11
MAJOR TITLES WON: ECW World, ECW TV (2 times), WCW U.S., WWE hardcore (3 times), CWA (Germany) tag team (2 times), Border City Wrestling TV
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 398 in 1997, 241 in 1999, 19 in 2000, 10 in 2001, 57 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

●●●●● CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Graduate of the Can-Am Wrestling School debuted in 1994 ... Competed in Germany throughout 1998 ... Joined ECW in 1999 and allied with Steve Corino ... Beat Tajiri for the ECW TV title on April 22, 2000 ... Upset for the belt by Kid Kash in August 2000 but quickly regained the title ... Won the ECW World title from The Sandman at Guilty as Charged 2001, making him the final ECW champion ... Debuted in WWE in March 2001, helping old buddies Edge and Christian defeat the Hardys for the tag belts ... Beat Kane for the hardcore title ... Joined the WCW/ECW Alliance and quickly became one of the most dangerous Alliance members ... Beat old ECW nemesis Tajiri to win the U.S. title at Unforgiven 2001 ... Underwent surgery to repair a herniated disk in November 2001 ... Returned to WWE in February 2003, teaming with Chris Benoit ... The two would soon be feuding ... Was released by WWE shortly after WrestleMania 21.

●●●●● DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Utterly destroying Tajiri to win his first ECW TV title. Rhyno showed he was a true powerhouse and a legitimate title threat. Unfortunately, by the time he finally won the ECW World title, the company was on its last legs. He was never finer than he was in the spring of 2001.

●●●●● STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Ability to recognize openings. Rhyno can connect with his gore in the opening seconds of a match or later on, when both he and his opponent are fatigued. The gore is a great equalizer that can be used at any time, making him a threat to any challenger.

●●●●● WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Tends to telegraph the gore, allowing opponents to elude his rush and sending him careening into the corner. While we understand the importance of showmanship, it should never cost a guy a match.

●●●●● WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Monty Brown. If Rhyno signs with TNA when his non-compete clause expires, fans could be in for an epic clash of the pounce and the gore. Not only could it be an entertaining series, but it could also propel the winner to an NWA title shot.

●●●●● WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Anyone from the ECW days. This may be the summer of ECW reunions, but Rhyno has to let people know he's still a viable contender and not a nostalgia act. As ECW's last champion, Rhyno had to know the pressure was on him to appear, but hanging around with Shane Douglas, Bam Bam Bigelow, Sandman and the rest of the old ECW gang too much won't do anything for him in the long run.

●●●●● SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A haircut. Seriously, he always has that greasy hair covering his face, acting as a veil between him and the audience. He should get an image makeover and find a new, less caveman look.

RHYNO

The gore is a huge key to Rhyno's success

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Touring Germany early in his career. Rhyno gained experience on the other side of the Atlantic, then arrived in ECW after testing himself against international competition. The result is that he came into ECW seemingly out of nowhere, dominating opponents who never had a chance to scout him or learn his weaknesses.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Winding up in the WWE doghouse. There have been reports that Rhyno's temper got the best of him and he ticked off some front office members We could understand him being frustrated about WWE matchmaking, but he probably should have handled things differently.

●●●●●

WE SAID IT:

"Rhyno's neck injury really curtailed his career. His WWE release needs to be a wakeup call. It's time for him to get back to goring people with reckless abandon."

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

"TNA seems to be the logical choice for Rhyno, but I think he would be better served in Japan. Jamal, Bull Buchanan, and A-Train are all doing very well over there. I think he would fit in nicely."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Rhyno has a lot of opportunities in front of him, maybe more now than ever before. Whatever path he takes, he needs to chose wisely and give it his all. He still has the potential for greatness, but time is running out."

—Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz

KANE

VITAL STATISTICS

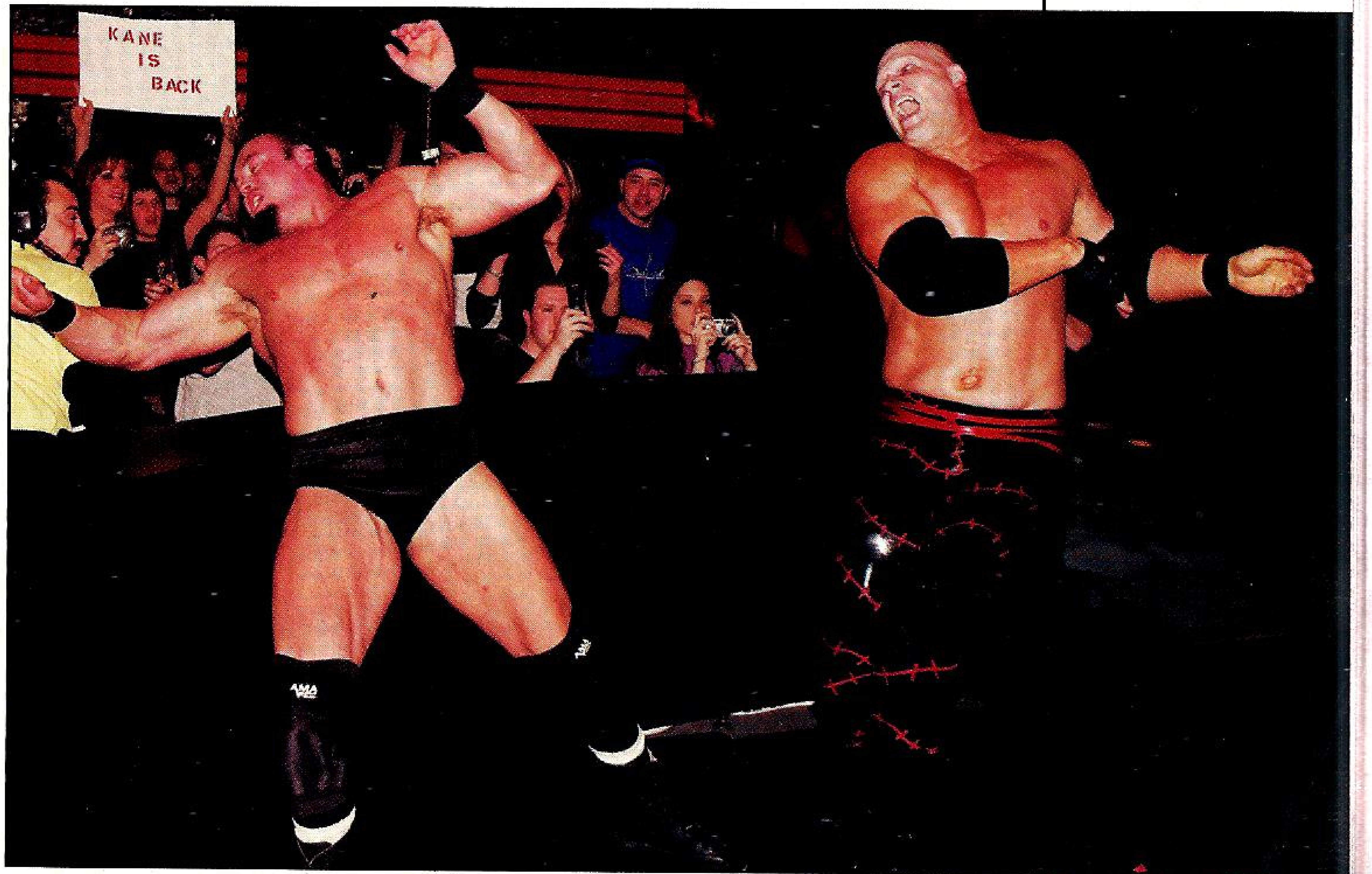
HEIGHT: 6'7"
WEIGHT: 326
HOMETOWN: St. Louis, MO
YEARS PRO: 11
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE World, WWE Intercontinental, WWE hardcore, WWE World tag team (6 times), WWE Raw tag team (2 times), WCW World tag team, Smoky Mountain tag team
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 390 in 1994, 103 in 1995, 175 in 1997, 21 in 1998, 13 in 1999, 34 in 2000, 16 in 2001, 55 in 2002, 23 in 2003, 13 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Tag Team (with X-Pac, 1999; 1st runner-up, with Undertaker, in 2001; 2nd runner-up, with Mankind, in 1998; 3rd runner-up, with Undertaker, in 1998), Feud (3rd runner-up in 2004), Most Hated (1st runner-up in 2003)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Believe it or not, Kane was trained by scientific master Dean Malenko ... Competed as Unibomb in Smoky Mountain Wrestling and as Doomsday in the USWA ... Debuted in the WWF as psychotic dentist Isaac Yankem, an ally of Jerry Lawler ... That didn't stick ... Briefly competed as the impostor Diesel after Kevin Nash left the company ... That didn't work, either ... Returned as Kane, Undertaker's masked and disfigured half-brother ... Feuded with Undertaker but lost to him at WrestleMania XIV ... Lost to UT again in an inferno match at Unforgiven ... Beat World champ Steve Austin in a first-blood match at the 1998 King of the Ring PPV, but lost the belt back to Austin the following night ... Won seven WWE and WCW world tag titles from 1998 to 2001, teaming with Mankind, X-Pac, and 'Taker ... Beat Triple-H for the Intercontinental title at Judgment Day 2001 ... Won Raw tag titles with The Hurricane and Rob Van Dam ... Soon turned against RVD ... Lost his mask to Triple-H and went on the most destructive evil streak of his career, piledriving Linda McMahon, menacing Lita, and injuring and/or burning Matt Hardy, Jim Ross, and Shane McMahon ... Lost once again to UT at WrestleMania XX ... Somehow became a fan favorite during his feud with Gene Snitsky ... Smarting from the loss of his "wife," Lita, to Edge.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Losing the mask in 2003. It awakened the demon inside "The Big Red Machine." He has been a title threat ever since.



Kane can outbrawl Gene Snitsky

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Kane is the consummate power wrestler. He dominates early and dominates often. Generally, his matches go as long as he wants them to go, depending on whether he wants to toy with his opponent or hit the showers early.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Kane sometimes gets so worked up trying to injure opponents that he forgets about trying to win. There have been countless times when Kane could have accepted a countout victory or pinned an opponent but instead opted to pick his opponent up off the mat to deliver more punishment. That's one of the reasons he hasn't won a world title since 1998.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Kane's short-range target is Edge, the man who stole his "wife" and played him for a fool in the Gold Rush Tournament. But beating Edge is just the means to a greater end. Kane is still burned by the fact that in all this time in WWE, he only has one24-hour world title reign to show for it. Kane desperately wants another world title, and either the Raw or Smackdown variety will suffice.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

The Undertaker. The feud between "The Brothers Of Destruction" is like the Energizer Bunny ... it just keeps going and going and going.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

The Undertaker rejuvenated his career by gradually incorporating some mixed martial arts techniques into his offense. Maybe adding some ground and pound and submissions to his game would help Kane, too.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Keeping the mask for so long. He always had a certain mystique about him, with everyone wondering just what he looked like underneath the hood. It turns out he wasn't horribly disfigured, but he kept everyone wanting to see him unmasked for several years.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Burying Undertaker alive at the 2003 Survivor Series. Why does Kane keep pushing 'Taker's buttons? He always seems to end up on the receiving end of a series of tombstones for his efforts.

WE SAID IT:

"For the longest time, people pushed Kane to get rid of the mask, all of us at *PWI* included. Now some people are pushing for him to put the mask back on. Maybe he should. It's obvious he needs a change of some sort. But maybe a jump to Smackdown would be enough to help."

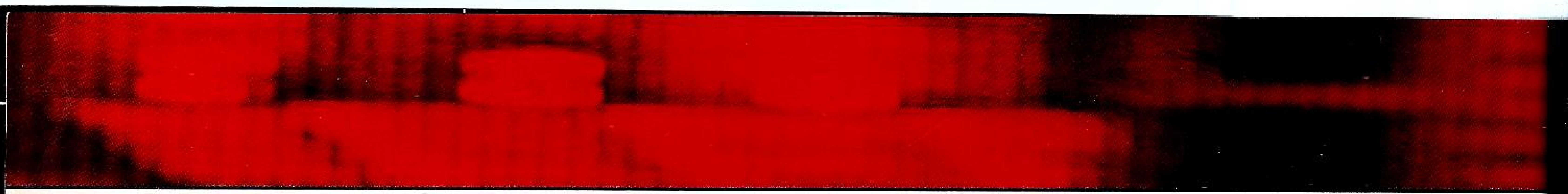
—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"Kane is a hell of a fighter, but he's not all that bright. He could really use a manager—or agent, if that's what they're calling them these days—to help him get to the top. Is Paul Bearer still available?"

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Kane could use a little bit of time away from WWE, just to freshen himself up a bit. Other than shedding the mask, he has been doing virtually the same thing in WWE for eight years, and that's an eternity in wrestling. Maybe he could spend a few months in OVW or just take a bit of a hiatus. Kane is still a relatively young man who could still accomplish great things."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter



Randy ORTON

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'5"
WEIGHT: 245
HOMETOWN: St. Louis, MO
YEARS PRO: 5
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Raw, WWE Intercontinental, OVW hardcore (2 times)
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 217 in 2001, 33 in 2002, 63 in 2003, 5 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Rookie (2001), Most Improved (2004), Wrestler (1st runner-up in 2004), Match (1st runner-up in 2004, 2nd runner-up in 2004), Feud (1st runner-up in 2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

The third-generation grappler made his pro debut in 2000 ... Beat the lumbering Mr. Black for the OVW hardcore title on February 14, 2001 ... Incredible wheelbarrow suplex finisher made him one of the promotion's most dynamic young stars ... Named Rookie of the Year by *PWI* readers in 2001 ... Debuted in WWE as a member of the Smackdown roster but jumped to Raw in September 2002 ... Recruited by Triple-H into Evolution in January 2003 ... Won the Intercontinental belt from Rob Van Dam on December 14, 2003, and held it until July 11, 2004 ... Came of age in a brutal feud with Cactus Jack ... Won the Raw title—becoming the youngest world champion in WWE history in the process—by beating Chris Benoit cleanly at SummerSlam 2004 ... Booted from Evolution the following night... Triple-H regained the belt less than a month later ... Since then, Orton has shown signs of frustration and turned heel ... Lost to The Undertaker at WrestleMania 21 ... Recovering from shoulder surgery at press time.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Orton's life turned upside-down the moment a jealous Triple-H gave that thumbs-down signal, marking the end of Orton's days with Evolution. Since that moment, Orton has gone from being WWE's next big fan favorite to being another cocky heel. He has yet to fully recover from that violent rejection.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Orton's quick reflexes and superior genes give him fast reaction times. It is astounding how quickly he can connect with an RKO, even when he seems to be in trouble.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

For some reason, Orton seems to feel entitled to greatness. Maybe he has been reading too many of his own press clippings. That pride has hurt him, as he seems to feel like he doesn't need to work as hard to win as he used to. The lackadaisical attitude is killing him.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Hulk Hogan. Orton is running out of legends to humble. It's really pretty sad that he counts sneak-attacks on Fabulous Moolah and Harley Race as part of his "legend-killing" streak. If he could score a pinfall over Hogan, it would do more for his career than a dozen sneak-attacks.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

That wheelbarrow suplex into a Boston crab he used so effectively in OVW. That would add another element to his game, giving him both a high-impact setup move and a credible submission finisher.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Joining Evolution. Many of us thought it was a mistake at the time, but Triple-H deliv-

●●●●● Randy
ORTON

Randy Orton covets what Batista has

ered on his promise of making Orton a superstar. He's been out of the group for almost a year now and hasn't come close to touching the success he had with "The Game," Ric Flair, and Batista.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Calling out The Undertaker. It was a valiant effort, and Orton came as close as anybody to ending 'Taker's big WrestleMania unbeaten streak, but Orton came up short. Instead of mounting a challenge to regain the Raw title, he wasted time with 'Taker, and it ended up dropping him further down in the rankings. Plus he aggravated his shoulder injury in the match.

●●●●●

WE SAID IT:

"Orton still has more upside potential than anyone else in WWE, including John Cena. He's in a lull right now, but how he responds to his latest injury might set the tone for the rest of his career."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"It's obvious that Vince McMahon thinks highly of Orton. Why else would Vince make one of his few televised appearances since he hurt himself at the Royal Rumble during an Orton promo? He recognizes that Orton is struggling, but gave him a big vote of confidence in that *Raw* interview segment."

—Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz

"Orton is a natural heel. That's why he never quite took off as a good guy. Besides, why should fans cheer him? His 'turn' was just getting jumped by Evolution. Since when is the inability to keep friends a reason to be cheered?"

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

Ric
FLAIR

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 243
HOMETOWN: Charlotte, NC
YEARS PRO: 33
MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW World (6 times), NWA World (8 times), WWF World (2 times), WWE Raw tag team (2 times), NWA Mid-Atlantic tag team (3 times), NWA Mid-Atlantic TV (3 times), Mid-Atlantic heavyweight (4 times), NWA World tag team (3 times), NWA/WCW U.S. (6 times), NWA Missouri State, WCW International heavyweight
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 3 in 1991, 3 in 1992, 6 in 1993, 3 in 1994, 20 in 1995, 10 in 1996, 35 in 1997, 55 in 1998, 42 in 1999, 43 in 2000, 34 in 2002, 53 in 2003, 20 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Wrestler (1992, 1989, 1986, 1985, 1984, 1981, 1st runner-up in 1987 and in 1982, 2nd runner-up in 1996, 3rd runner-up in 1994 and in 1988), Rookie (1975), Most Popular (1st runner-up in 1989, 2nd runner-up in 1997), Most Hated (1987, 1978, 1st runner-up in 1992, 1990, 1986, and in 1977), Match (1989, 1986, 1984, 1983, 1st runner-up in 1990, 1988, 1987, 1982, 1981, and in 1978, 2nd runner-up in 1994, 1989, 1985, and in 1977, 3rd runner-up in 1996, 1987, 1984, and in 1978), Tag Team (3rd runner-up in 1977), Inspirational (1st runner-up in 1979, 3rd runner-up in 1989), Feud (1990, 1989, 1988, 1987, 1st runner-up in 1996, 1994, 1992, and in 1986, 2nd runner-up in 1998, 3rd runner-up in 1999 and in 1995), Comeback (2nd runner-up in 1993, 3rd runner-up in 1997)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

How can you possibly summarize the "Nature Boy's" incredible career in a mere 250 or so words? ... Likes to say that when the history of wrestling is written, he'll be on the cover of the book, and few would dispute that claim ... Made his pro debut in the AWA in December 1972 ... Jumped to the NWA a short time later ... Survived a plane crash in Wilmington, North Carolina, but broke his back in three places. Doctors said he would never wrestle again ... Amazingly, he has since gone on to win 16 (though some would argue the number is greater) world championships ... Formed the legendary heel faction The Four Horsemen and guided the group on and off for more than a decade ... Named Wrestler of the Decade for the 1980s by *PWI* ... Can boast victories over the biggest names in the sport over the past three decades, stretching from Buddy Rogers to Shawn Michaels ... Named Wrestler of the Year by *PWI* readers six times from 1981 to 1992 ... A charter member of the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame ... Perhaps the most decorated and respected wrestler ever to lace up the boots ... Became a mentor to Triple-H, Randy Orton, and Batista when he became the elder statesman in Evolution... Even at 56 years old, Flair remains the dirtiest player in the game and is still able to beat men 30 years his junior.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

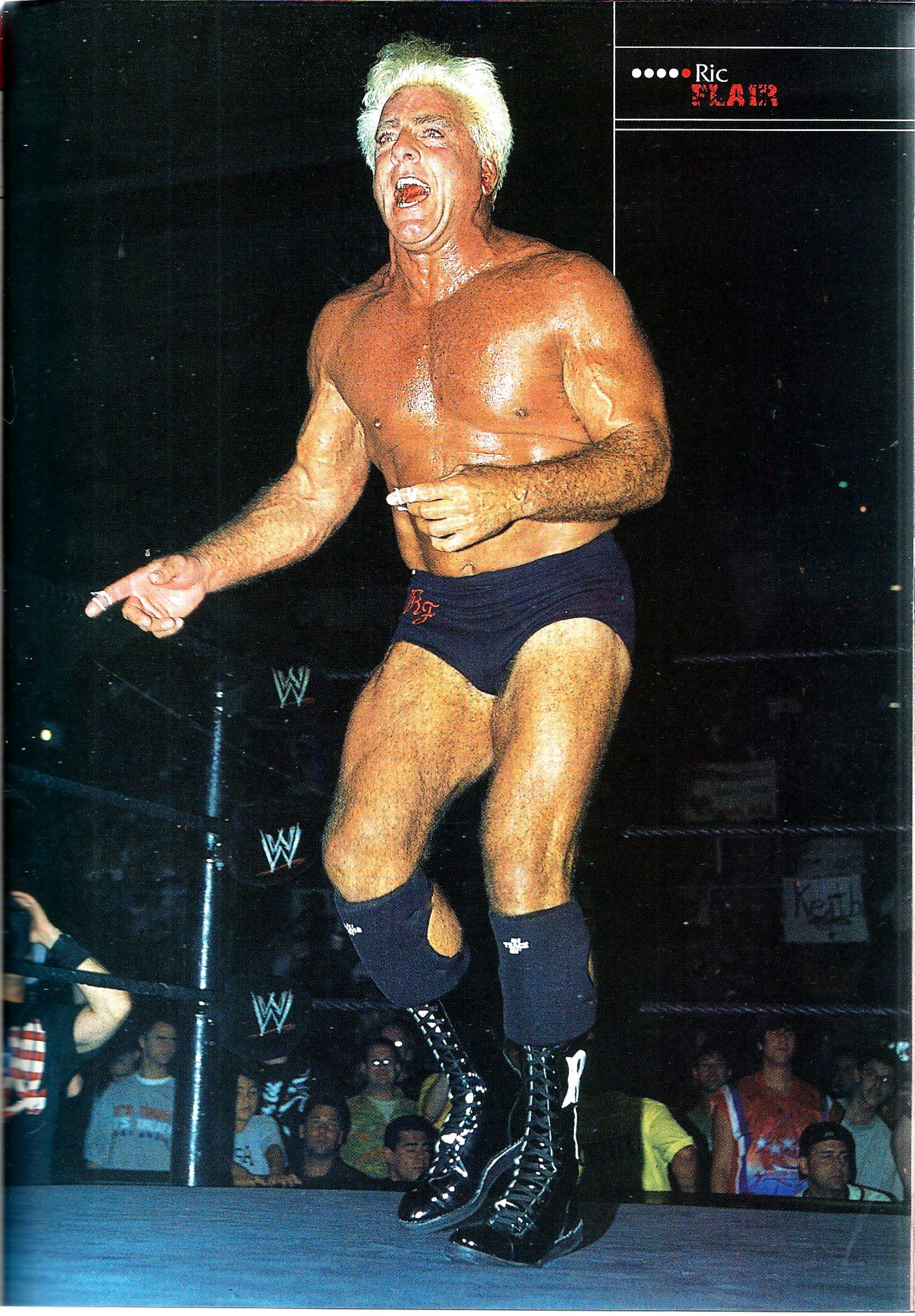
Beating Harley Race for his second NWA World title at Starrcade 1983. The event—one of wrestling's first supercards—was dubbed "A Flair For The Gold." Flair toppled Race for his second championship and proved his 1981 win over Dusty Rhodes was hardly a fluke.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Flair used to be the 60-minute man, but those days are gone. Now he's more of a six-minute man. He has lost a lot of his stamina and has to get in most of his offense in the first few minutes. If he can land those big chops and hook on the figure-four in the first five minutes or less, there's a chance he'll have the match in hand.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

There's not a move Flair shows that we haven't seen before. Today's wrestlers have grown up watching Flair's matches. They often know what he's going to do before Flair does.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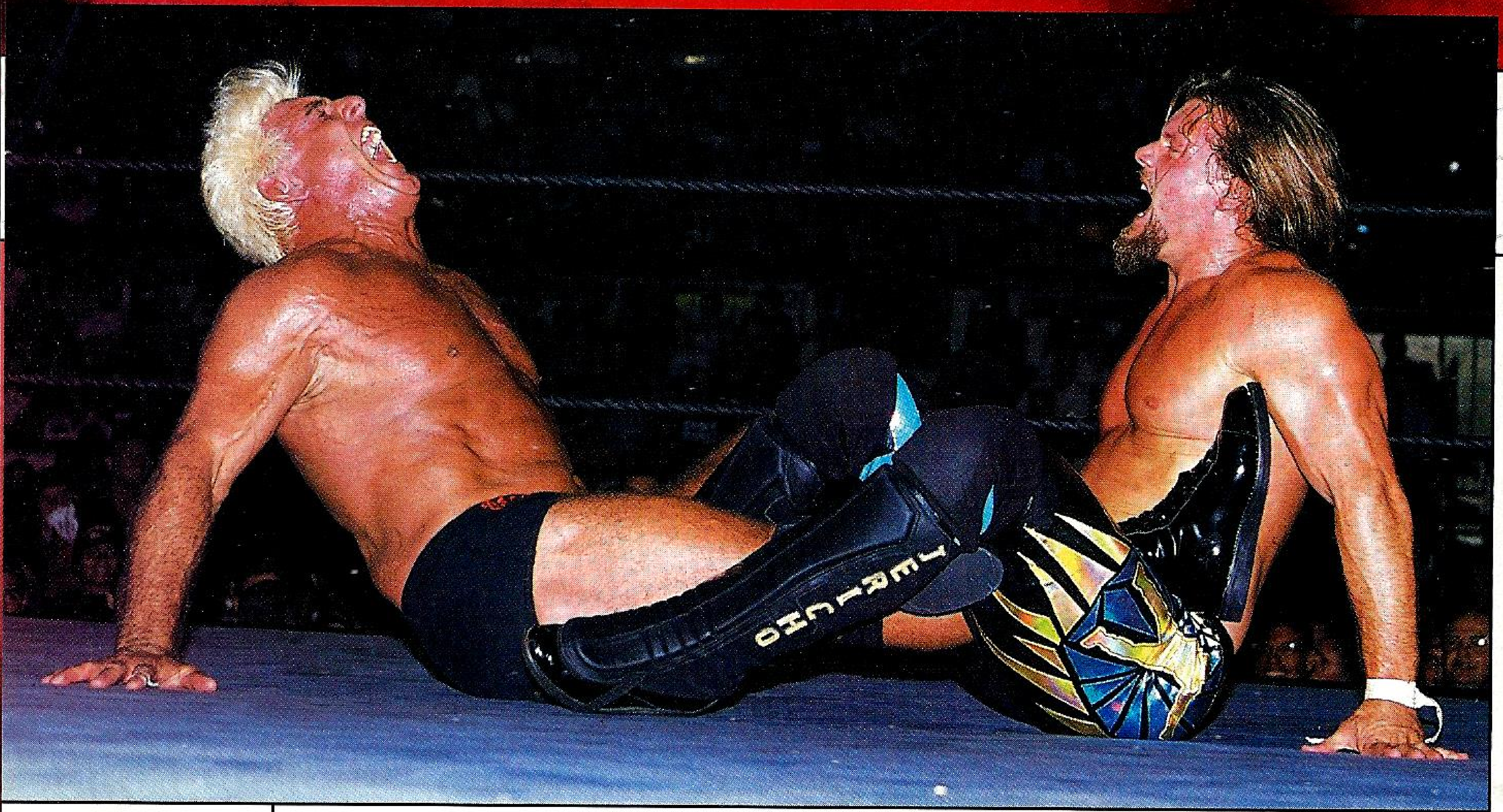


That ol' figure-four still works ... sometimes

That makes it harder for him to surprise opponents. Everyone has him scouted.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Triple-H. They have clashed a few times, but not in a featured pay-per-view bout. It would be a perfect way for Flair to either officially pass the torch to his favorite wrestler or make a last stand for greatness.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Hulk Hogan. WCW ran that match into the ground in the mid- to late-1990s. As much as we love Flair and Hogan, does anyone want to see them face each other again?

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A new Evolution. Flair could assemble a new group of young studs to dominate Raw and follow in the footsteps of Batista, Orton, Triple-H, and The Four Horsemen.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Not listening to the doctors back in 1975. They said he'd never wrestle again. They said he might never walk again. And he went on to become arguably the greatest competitor to ever grace the squared circle. Second opinion, anyone?

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Two words: Paul Roma. What was Flair thinking when he introduced the career preliminary wrestler as the newest Horseman in 1993? Was The Italian Stallion busy?

WE SAID IT:

"There aren't enough superlatives to cover Flair's career. By my count, he has won 17 *PWI* Achievement Awards and received 37 runner-up spots. If that's not a testament to how Flair has captured the fans' imagination, I don't know what is."

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

"Flair obviously isn't the wrestler he once was, but he's still one of the most charismatic and entertaining wrestlers in the business. It's good to see him working with younger wrestlers and sharing some of his tricks of the trade before he retires—if he ever retires."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

"Flair is the greatest professional wrestler of the second half of the 20th century, and he's still a productive and extraordinarily valuable part of the Raw roster. Even after all these years, he still is *the man.*"

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

MAVEN

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'2"
WEIGHT: 210
HOMETOWN: Chantilly, VA
YEARS PRO: 4
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE hardcore (3 times)
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 107 in 2002, 88 in 2003, 142 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Rookie (2002)

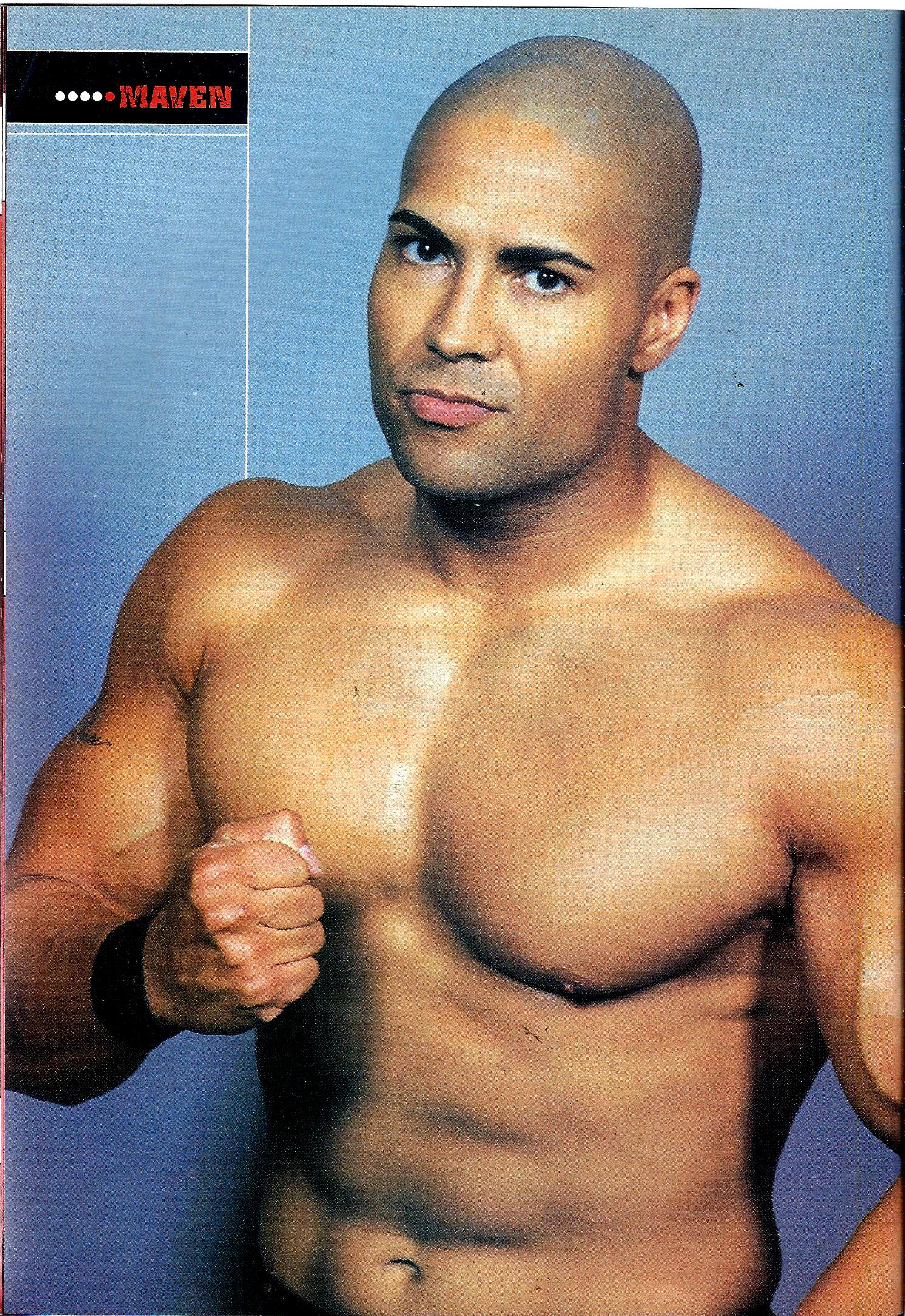
CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Maven Huffman was the winner (along with Nidia) of the first *Tough Enough* competition, which aired on MTV in 2001 ... After signing a WWE contract, Maven was assigned to the Heartland Wrestling Association developmental territory in Cincinnati ... A token spot in the 2002 Royal Rumble gave him a brush with greatness, as he shockingly eliminated The Undertaker from the match with a picture-perfect dropkick ... Undertaker then gave Maven the thrashing of a lifetime ... Beat 'Taker for the hardcore title on February 5, 2002 ... Went on to capture the hardcore title three times ... Beat his mentor, Al Snow, for his second hardcore title on a March edition of *Smackdown* ... Feuded with fellow *Tough Enough* star Christopher Nowinski ... Selected by Vince McMahon for the Smackdown brand in the initial brand extension draft ... Suffered a broken fibula in May 2002 ... Named 2002 Rookie of the Year by readers of Pro Wrestling Illustrated ... Slowly built a cult following and received a surprisingly high number of fan votes for the Taboo Tuesday Intercontinental title shot in October 2004 ... Joined Randy Orton, Chris Benoit, and Chris Jericho in beating Triple-H, Batista, Gene Snitsky, and Edge at the 2004 Survivor Series ... Adopted a more arrogant persona, but was humbled by I-C champ Shelton Benjamin ... Now shilling the Simon System with Simon Dean.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Welcome to the WWE rollercoaster. First Maven eliminated The Undertaker from the

Maven tries to escape Steven Richards' clutches



•••••**MAVEN**

2002 Royal Rumble, then he was battered into a bloody mess and ignominiously thrown through a backstage popcorn machine. That experience probably taught him more about the world of pro wrestling than all that *Tough Enough* training combined.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Maven is difficult to evaluate because he continuously tries new approaches to find one that will work best for him. As an arrogant heel, the strongest part of his game is right before the bell sounds. He irritates his opponents and gets them angry enough to make foolhardy charges, often giving Maven openings. Unfortunately for Maven, he doesn't capitalize on those openings nearly enough.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Maven still lacks confidence, and that's largely due to his unusual introduction to the sport. Instead of honing his craft on the indy circuit, he won a reality show. The whole world watched his training, and he knows it. He has fewer moves to fall back on than opponents who have been around the block and learned dozens of moves and counters along the way. And that makes him hesitant and tentative.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

The best thing Maven could do right now is concentrate 100 percent on his new team with Simon Dean. He and Dean just might be good enough to win the Raw tag belts, and Maven could get another taste of championship gold.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Shelton Benjamin. The I-C champion humiliated Maven at New Year's Revolution and in subsequent rematches. Frankly, Maven was overmatched. But being overmatched against a rising star like Benjamin is no cause for panic. He just needs to put those losses behind him and move on. But under no circumstances should he face Benjamin again anytime soon.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A kangaroo dropkick. Maven achieves great height on his dropkick, but he should aim a bit lower and kick more. Keiji Muto is a master of taking out his opponents' knees with a lightning-quick series of low, seated dropkicks. With Maven's tendon strength and athleticism, his could be even more devastating.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Trying out for *Tough Enough*. Really, without winning that contest, where would he be today?

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

He never should have challenged Benjamin before he was ready. Those losses hurt his credibility and set him back further than any injury.

WE SAID IT:

"Maven will always have the mixed blessing of being the first *Tough Enough* winner. That mean he'll always be a marked man by people who want to make an example out of him. He needs allies. Simon Dean is a good first step."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"Dean and Maven could jell into a very good team, but they need to stop doing comedy bits if they ever want to be taken seriously."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Maven should set himself up as the *Tough Enough* legend killer, almost like Kurt Angle's hometown challenges. Each week, he could face another young hopeful, building to a PPV match against Daniel Puder, perhaps."

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

Shawn
MICHAELS

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 217
HOMETOWN: San Antonio, TX
YEARS PRO: 21

MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE World (3 times), WWE Raw, WWE Intercontinental (3 times), WWE European, WWE World tag team (3 times), AWA World tag team (2 times), Texas All-Star tag team (2 times), Central States tag team

***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 37 in 1991, 16 in 1992, 3 in 1993, 5 in 1994, 2 in 1995, 1 in 1996, 18 in 1997, 49 in 1998, 32 in 2003, 9 in 2004

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Match (2004, 1996, 1995, 1994, 1993, 1st runner-up in 2002, 1998, 1996, and in 1995, 2nd runner-up in 1997, 3rd runner-up in 2003), Most Popular (1996, 1995), Most Hated (3rd runner-up in 1993), Wrestler (1st runner-up in 1996 and in 1995, 2nd runner-up in 1993), Tag Team (3rd runner-up in 1986)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

"The Heartbreak Kid" made his pro debut in 1984 after training under Jose Lothario ... Won the AWA World tag title with Marty Jannetty as The Midnight Rockers ... Joined the WWF in 1988 ... Split violently with Jannetty and began competing as a singles wrestler ... Beat Davey Boy Smith for the Intercontinental title in 1992 ... Hired Kevin "Diesel" Nash as his bodyguard in 1993 ... Faced Nash for the World title in a losing effort at WrestleMania XI ... Finally beat Bret Hart to win the World title in a 60-plus-minute "Ironman" match at WrestleMania XII ... A founding member of the original DeGeneration X ... Won the World title three times before he announced his retirement after major back surgery in 1998 ... After briefly serving as commissioner, Michaels made a triumphant return to the ring, beating Triple-H at SummerSlam 2002 ... Captured the Raw title in the first-ever "Elimination Chamber" match at the 2002 Survivor Series ... Has scored major wins over Chris Jericho, Batista, and Kane, among others, since his comeback ... Still "The Showstopper" after all these years.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

No doubt about it, it was when Michaels beat arch-nemesis Bret Hart at WrestleMania XII. It was Michaels' night, from his drop-from-the-ceiling entrance to his sweet chin music at the end of overtime.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

You would never know Michaels had what was supposed to be career-ending back surgery seven years ago. Michaels can take a superhuman amount of punishment and still not stay down. This tends to frustrate his opponents, who begin to doubt themselves when they are unable to hold Michaels' shoulders to the mat. Once they get desperate, Michaels strikes back.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Michaels sometimes forgets he's not as strong—or as young—as he used to be. He still wrestles a fast-paced, high-risk style, and that has been known to get him into trouble on occasion.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Kurt Angle. Michaels may have lost to Angle at WrestleMania 21, but this war isn't dead by a long shot. Michaels wants to avenge that loss, and he will be lobbying for a rematch until the day he hangs up the boots once and for all.

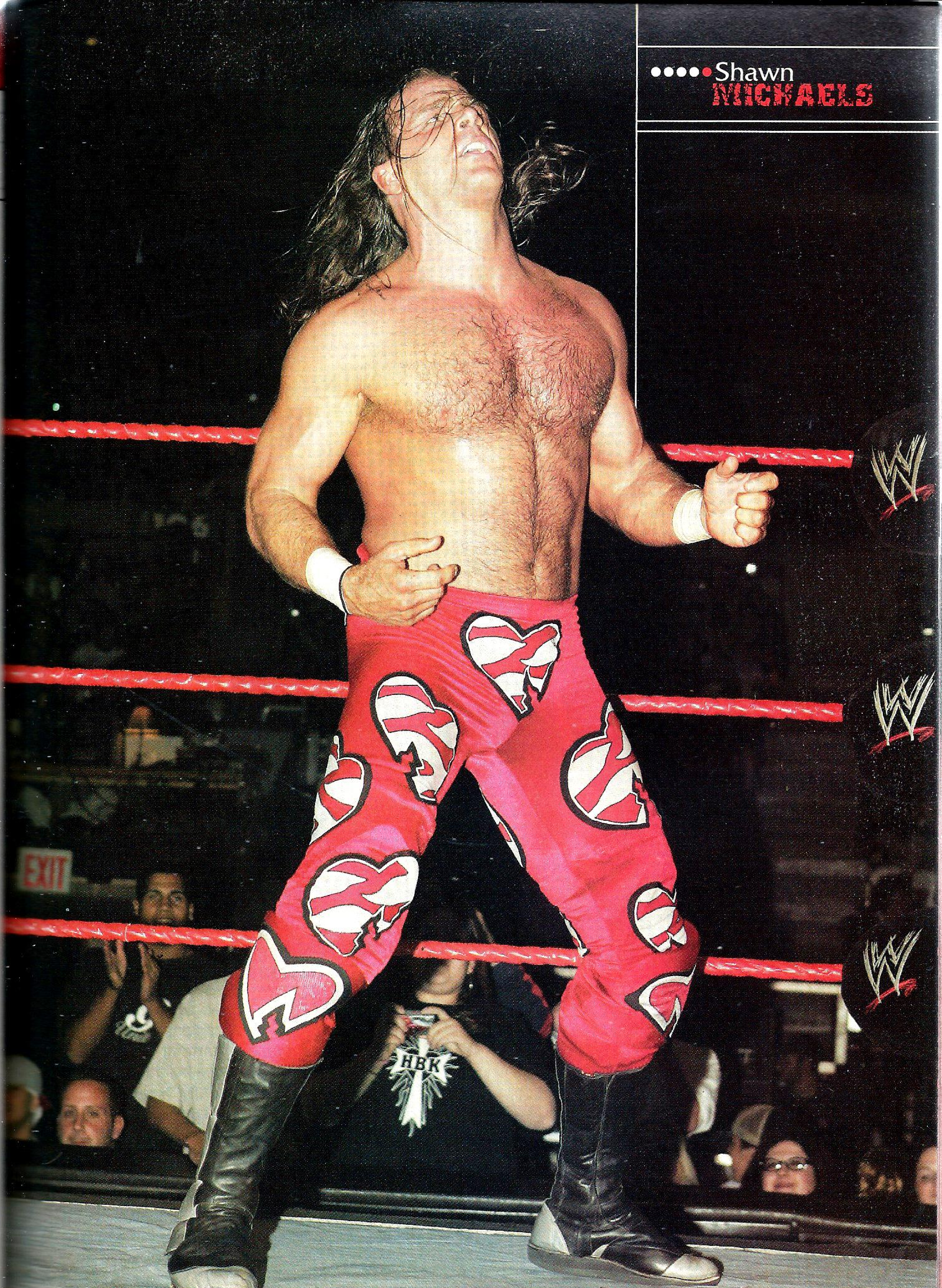
WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

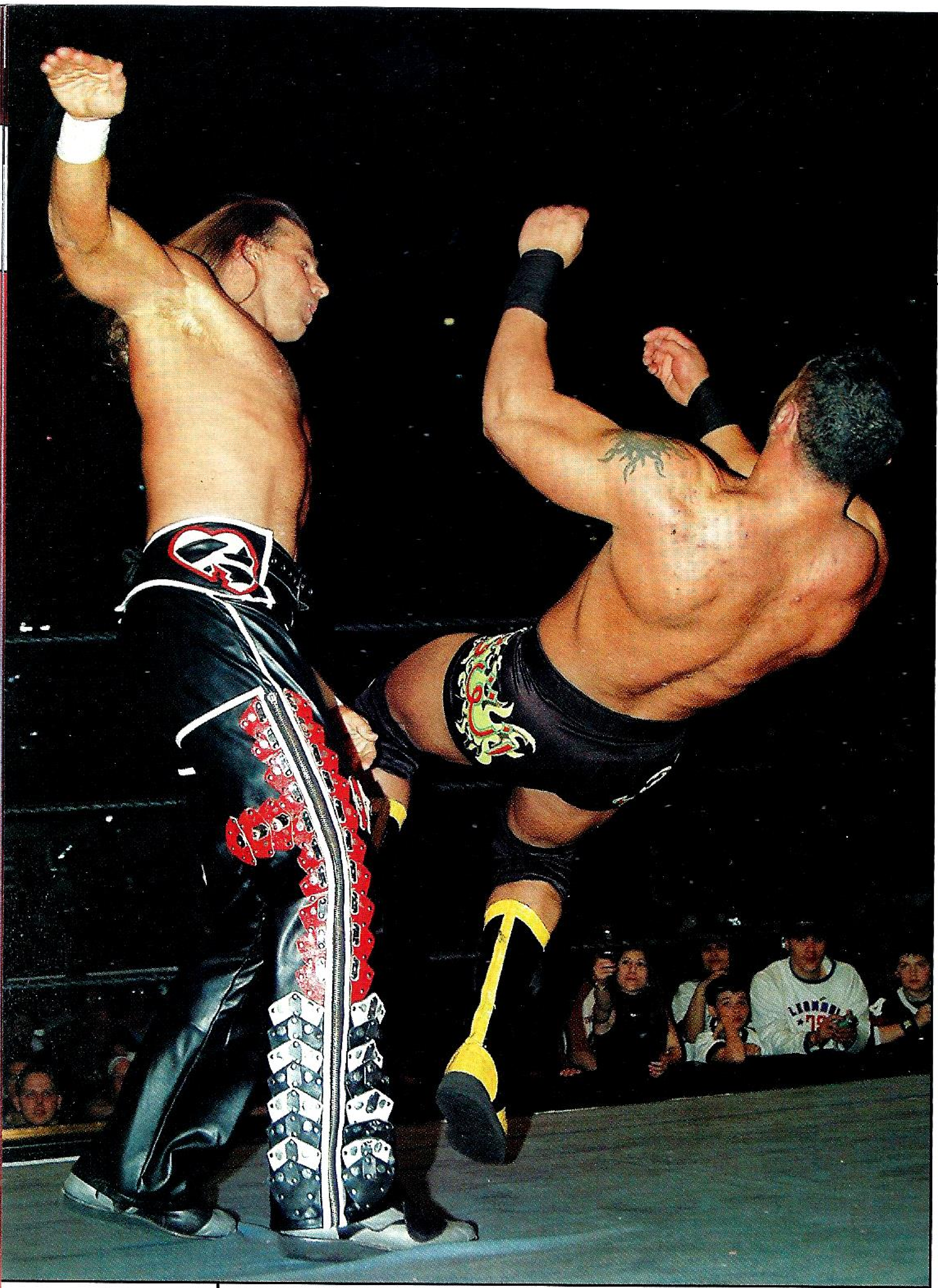
Kurt Angle. Despite what Michaels believes, he has nothing to prove against the former Olympian. He should be secure in his own accomplishments and move on. Rematches with Angle could lead to injury or more disheartening losses.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Michaels is another wrestler who could stand

●●●●● Shawn
MICHAELS





Shawn Michaels chops down Muhammad Hassan

to add a little more muscle mass if he wants to continue facing heavyweights. He was dwarfed by Angle and seems even smaller than the 217 pounds at which he is billed. He can't spend the rest of his career facing wrestlers who outweigh him by 40 pounds (or much more).

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Throwing Jannetty through the "Barber Shop" window in 1992. Michaels needed to put The Rockers behind him and did so in dramatic fashion. That was when his singles career took off.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

"Losing his smile." It took years for Michaels to win respect after several incidents in which he seemed to take his ball and go home, refusing to defend championships because of mysterious injuries. Whether his reasons were valid or not, he was tagged as a selfish, immature wrestler who walked away when things got tough for him. We're sure he regrets some of those decisions today.

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WE SAID IT:

"Michaels is one of the top two or three performers of the past decade, and probably one of the top 10 wrestlers of all-time. It's that simple."

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

"Michaels has slowed down a little from his prime, but his match against Angle showed he's still capable of putting on superlative matches. Who's to say he doesn't have at least a few more years left?"

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

"Michaels is a very good wrestler, but somebody has to tell him it's not 1992 anymore. Cut off the mullet, get rid of the gaudy ring attire, and for God's sake, please stop calling yourself a sexy boy! You're 40 years old now."

—Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz

LITA

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'7"
WEIGHT: 135
HOMETOWN: Fort Lauderdale, FL
YEARS PRO: 5
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE women's (2 times)
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** None
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Woman of the Year (2001, 1st runner-up in 2000), Rookie (1st runner-up in 2000)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Fiery redhead trained in Mexico under Ricky Santana, Miguel Perez, and others ... Briefly competed in Mexico's EMLL before joining ECW as Angelica and later Miss Congeniality ... Managed Danny Doring and Roadkill ... Signed a WWE developmental deal in late-1999 and was sent to Memphis Championship Wrestling ... Got her WWE start managing Essa Rios ... Broke away from Rios and began managing The Hardy Boyz ... Trademark became wrestling with her thong exposed ... Beat Stephanie McMahon to win the women's title in a 2000 match refereed by The Rock ... Went public with her relationship with Matt Hardy in 2001 ... Suffered a career-threatening neck injury while filming an episode of the Fox TV show *Dark Angel* in April 2002 ... Recovered from surgery and returned to Raw shows in April 2003 ... Caught in a soap opera love triangle (storyline) with Hardy and Kane ... Forced to marry Kane against her will on *Raw,* but since seems to have grown fond of the big lug ... Regained the women's title by beating Trish Stratus on December 6, 2004 ... Suffered a knee injury at 2005's New Year's Revolution PPV ... Currently recovering from knee surgery.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Beating Stephanie for her first women's title. The Rock— the company's most popular star—took a secondary role, which shows you just how popular Lita was (and how hated Stephanie was) at her peak. Truly a watershed moment.

Lita has seen enough of Trish in the last five years!

STRONGEST PART OF HER MATCHES:

Lita goes all out in the first couple minutes of her matches and is often able to hit her variation of the twist of fate within four minutes. Her high-energy attacks overwhelm her opponents.

WEAKEST PART OF HER MATCHES:

Lita has become too tentative since suffering her neck injury. She has cut back on the daredevil moves—huracanaras, moonsaults, and the like—that were big keys to her initial success. Being too careful and wrestling purely to avoid injury at times can actually have the opposite effect and make a wrestler more prone to injury. That mindset might have contributed to her freak knee injury.

WHOM SHE WANTS TO FACE:

Alexis Laree. Lita actually came out and said so in an interview a few years back. If this match ever happens, it might be enough to reignite Lita's competitive flame. After facing Stratus and Victoria so many times, she needs a change of pace, and Laree could provide it.

WHOM SHE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Trish Stratus. There comes a time when a wrestler needs to step away from a long-running feud before it consumes everyone involved. The classic example of this happening was the epic Buzz Sawyer-Tommy Rich war of the early-1980s. Neither man was ever the same after it ended. Lita and Trish have been going at it on and off for five years now. It's about time for them to break it up.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HER REPERTOIRE:

Show us that thong. Seriously. Lita has lost some of her edge. The Lita we've seen with Kane is a watered-down version of the hellcat that took wrestling by storm just a few years ago. She needs to go back to her classic look and get her fire back.

SMARTEST MOVE SHE EVER MADE:

Ditching Essa Rios and joining forces with the Hardys. For a time, Team Extreme was one of the WWF's most popular acts, largely due to Lita's sexy tomboy appeal and visible sexy undergarments. The Hardys and Lita had great chemistry together, and none of them has had the same sizzle since they parted ways.

BIGGEST MISTAKE SHE EVER MADE:

Becoming romantically involved with Edge in real life. While we don't usually comment on personal issues, the news leaked out on the Internet a few months ago, and Lita has taken the backlash from some angry Mattitude followers. She's really taking some abuse from fans, and it could take a while for her to recover. Then again, the whole controversy could turn her into a great heel.

WE SAID IT:

"Lita was once seen as the savior of the women's division because of her flashy moves and crossover appeal. Her injuries have really taken a toll and hurt her career."

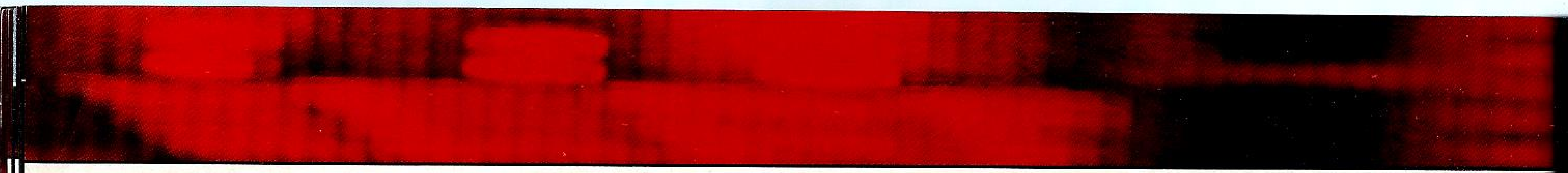
–Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"Lita raised the bar for women's wrestling. Unfortunately, the wrestlers who followed in her footsteps, like Victoria, Gail Kim, and others, have become more complete wrestlers and raised that bar even more, and Lita has had some trouble against the new generation of women."

–Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"The Lita situation is a microcosm of the women's division. Should Lita be a wrestler or a valet? Heck, should there even be women wrestlers in WWE, or are 'divas' the wave of the future? Until someone figures that out. Lita is kind of left hanging."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh



Simon DEAN

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'10"
WEIGHT: 214
HOMETOWN: Bricktown, NJ
YEARS PRO: 13
MAJOR TITLES WON: Border City tag team, Ultimate Pro Wrestling tag team, OVW heavyweight, OVW Southern tag team
***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 320 in 1996, 244 in 1997, 211 in 1999, 162 in 2000, 147 in 2001, 138 in 2002, 98 in 2003, 152 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Graduated from Iron Mike Sharpe's School of Wrestling and made his pro debut in 1992 ... Joined Raven's merry band of misfit wrestlers in ECW in 1995 ... Adopted the persona of Super Nova (later just Nova), a would-be superhero ... Gained some fame as a member of the Blue World Order, a hysterical knockoff of the NWO ... Became a cult hero in ECW ... Formed a promising team with Chris Chetti before Chetti's ego ruined the tandem ... Beat Chetti in a loser-leaves-ECW match at November to Remember 2000 ... Hit the indy circuit following the demise of ECW ... Signed a WWE developmental deal in 2001 ... Beat Prototype (John Cena) for the OVW heavyweight title on May 15, 2002 ... Teamed with Charlie Haas to beat The Basham Brothers in the finals of the Russ Haas Memorial Cup Tournament in August 2002 ... After dropping the OVW title, turned heel and formed The Jersey Crew with Aaron "Idol" Stevens, Danny Inferno, and Trudi DeNucci ... Debuted on WWE TV in early-2005 as the over-the-top Simon Dean, purveyor of the Simon System of physical fitness ... Currently teaming with Maven on Raw shows.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

A lot of people were skeptical of Nova before he beat John Cena to win the OVW heavyweight title in May 2002. Everyone figured Cena was a future superstar, but the future Simon Dean proved he had what it took to hang with a star on the rise in this hard-hitting bout. No doubt it made the WWE front office take notice of him.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Dean is at his most entertaining early on, when he riles his opponents with physical fitness displays such as pushups and jumping jacks. The calisthenics may not help him win matches, but they are entertaining.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Dean still hasn't shown off all his skills in WWE. Long-time ECW and OVW fans know the man behind the questionable Simon System is one of wrestling's most innovative and versatile performers. Dean hasn't let his abilities come to the surface in WWE, and that is hurting him.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Bring on Shelton Benjamin. No one in WWE is taking Simon Dean seriously these days, and that's a mistake. Dean has experience, underrated scientific skills, and impressive aerial abilities. If Benjamin makes the mistake of taking Dean lightly, Dean could find himself adding 10 pounds of gold to his 32-inch waist.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Batista. Dean and the Raw champion are polar opposites. If Dean sees Batista coming, he ought to run in the other direction. A power merchant like Batista could tear him apart. He doesn't match up well with big, strong foes.

Simon DEAN

Simon Dean wants what Shelton Benjamin has

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Dean ought to remember his roots and incorporate some of his old Nova moves in WWE. The Nova-caine could become one of WWE's hottest moves.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Developing the Simon System. Scoff if you want, but Dean's condescending promos and ever-present protein shakes have made him one of Raw's most hated competitors. Not bad for a guy who used to dress up like a superhero.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Underestimating The Disciples of Synn, Seven and Tomko, in OVW. Nova took a hellacious beating at their hands. If he had to do it all over again, odds are he would have stayed away from them.

WE SAID IT:

"Simon has done a tremendous job of reinventing himself wherever he goes. The fitness fanatic character he's currently portraying is a blast to watch."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"People tend to laugh when I say this, but I am confident that Dean is destined to win WWE gold before all is said and done. He is so good at being bad that it's only a matter of time before he gets a few more title shots. And I think he'll make the most of one of them."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"The guy belongs with Smackdown, where he could contend for the cruiserweight title and leave all this Simon System garbage behind him. He's a terrific wrestler with a lousy gimmick, and it's a shame."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

VICTORIA

VITAL STATISTICS

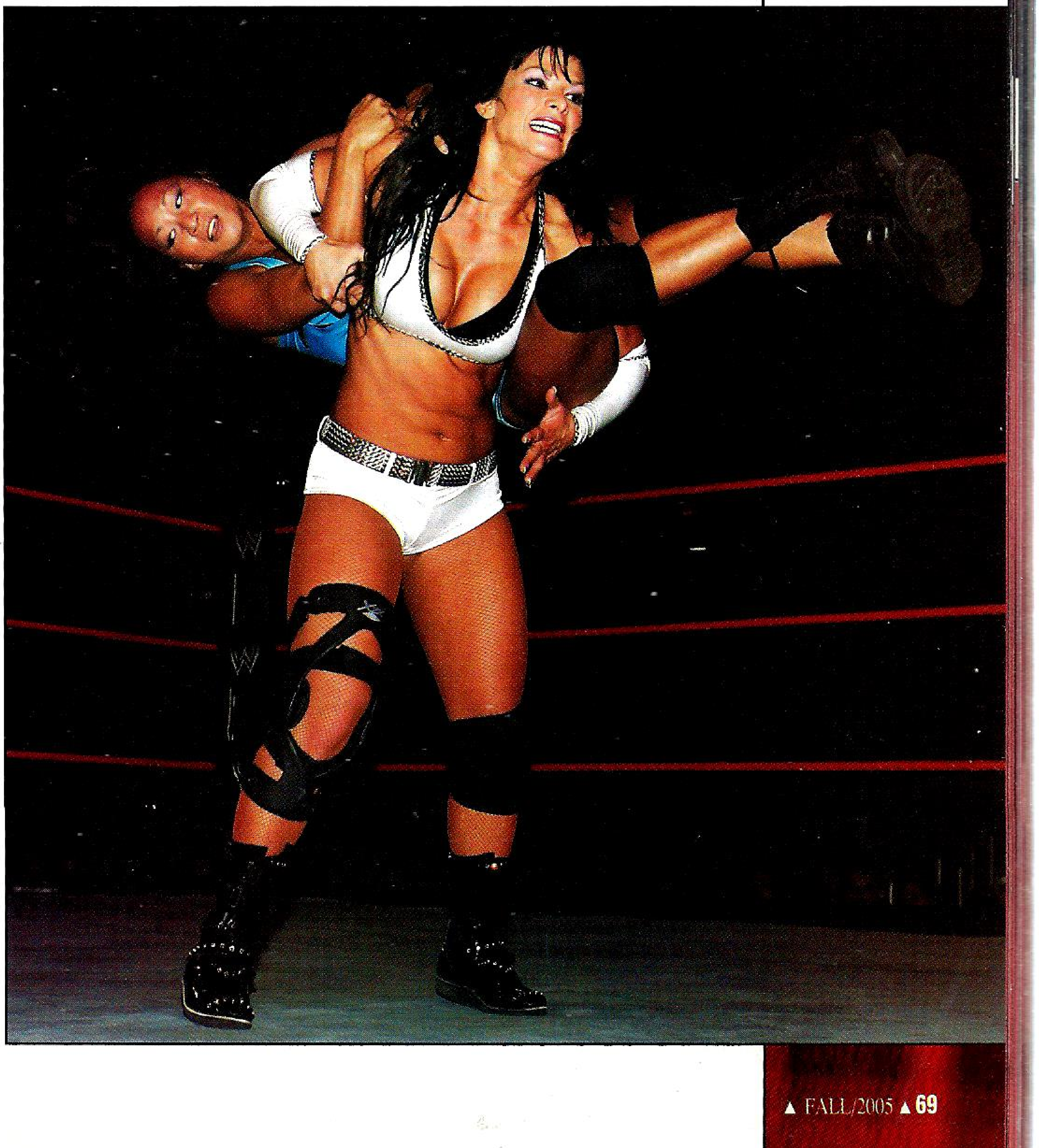
HEIGHT: 5'9"
WEIGHT: 136
HOMETOWN: Rialto, CA
YEARS PRO: 5
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE women's (2 times)
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: None
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Woman (2004, 2nd runner-up in 2003), Most Improved (3rd runner-up in 2003)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

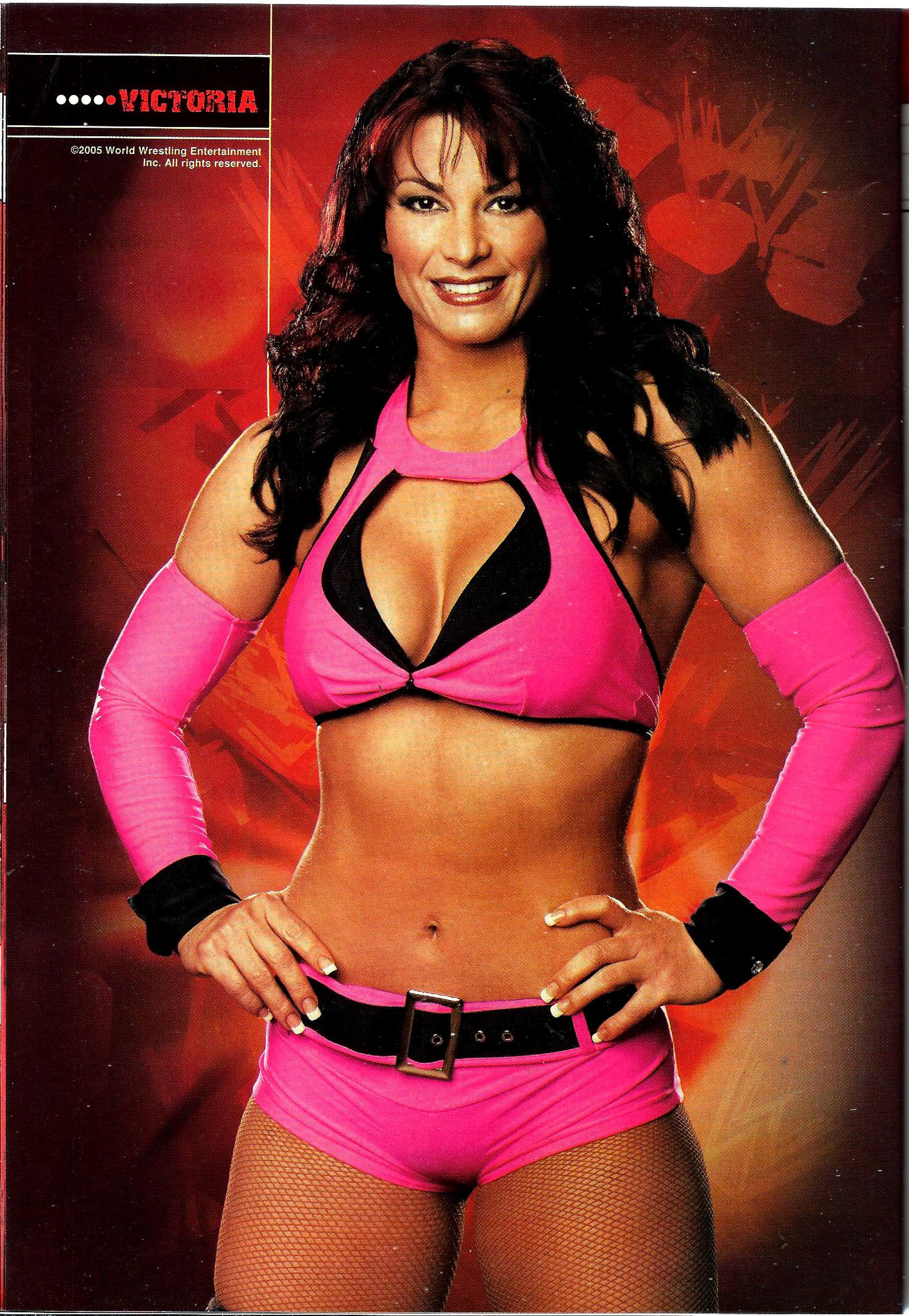
Award-winning fitness model trained for her career in the ring under Rick Bassman at the UPW training facility in Southern California ... First appeared in the WWF in 2000 as one of The Godfather's hos ... She was assigned to Memphis Championship Wrestling, a developmental territory in which she briefly served as commissioner ... Transferred to OVW and became Queen Victoria, evil matriarch of Doug Basham's Revolution faction ... Made her WWE wrestling debut in July 2002 ... Stood out from the rest of the divas by pulling her own raven tresses and screaming like a lunatic ... Beat Trish Stratus for the women's title during a violent feud ... Recruited Steven Richards as a manservant or love interest—we still don't know for sure ... Beat Lita in WWE's first-ever women's steel cage match ... Lost the title to Stratus in a three-way match at WrestleMania XIX ... Regained the belt in February 2004 ... Retained the title in a belt vs. hair match against Molly Holly at WrestleMania 20, then shaved Molly bald ... Lost the belt back to Stratus in a four-way bout in June 2004 ... Career has stalled in recent months.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Pretending to have an injured knee in her first WWE match against Stratus. Stratus stopped to check on Victoria's condition, and Victoria pounced, violently beating on her. She established herself as a ruthless woman who will do what it takes to win and a competitor who cannot be underestimated.



Victoria has Gail Kim totally confounded



VICTORIA

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STRONGEST PART OF HER MATCHES:

Everything Victoria does, she does with the flair of a dancer and the power of a competitive bodybuilder. Her grace belies surprising power. She overwhelms opponents in the first few minutes and tries to seal the win in short order.

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WEAKEST PART OF HER MATCHES:

Victoria has a glass jaw. Despite almost always enjoying a significant strength advantage over her opponents, she frequently yields control of a match after a relatively innocuous move, such as a punch, poke to the eyes, or kick to the midsection. She either has to toughen up or better defend herself against those desperation moves.

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WHOM SHE WANTS TO FACE:

Trish Stratus. Victoria vs. Stratus could be the defining women's feud of our time. Despite the fact that the two women have clashed many times, a decisive winner has yet to emerge. Trish has the gold today, but that could change at any time. If Victoria could decisively beat Trish, she would be looked upon as the top woman wrestler in the world.

●●●●●

WHOM SHE OUGHT TO AVOID:

The divas. Victoria is a consummate wrestler. She doesn't need to get mixed up with the non-wrestling models who can only distract her from her true goal—establishing herself as the dominant woman wrestler of today.

●●●●●

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HER REPERTOIRE:

One more knockout finishing maneuver. The widow's peak is extremely effective, but it would be good for her to have another flashy move to use when needed. She doesn't use her moonsault much anymore, but either that or a slingshot aerial move could allow her to one-up Lita and build her legacy.

●●●●●

SMARTEST MOVE SHE EVER MADE:

Taking The Godfather's stiff power bomb through a table and coming back for more. Victoria's commitment to wrestling and willingness to pay a physical price impressed WWE management early in her career.

●●●●●

BIGGEST MISTAKE SHE EVER MADE:

Getting "involved" with Steven Richards. Richards couldn't do much to help Victoria. Instead, he became just another distraction, miring her in silly mixed tag matches and costing her important matches with ill-conceived interference.

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WE SAID IT:

"Victoria was one of the first woman wrestlers who really made me take notice and come to accept women in the ring to some extent. She is a credit to the sport. And she's easy on the eyes, too."

—*Contributing Writer Matt Brock*

"I couldn't say a bad thing about Victoria. She has a great head on her shoulders and a fantastic attitude. I know Trish Stratus is considered the total package as far as women wrestlers go, but Victoria isn't far behind."

—*Senior Writer Dan Murphy*

"With Trish Stratus on the dark side and Lita losing fans because of her dalliances with Edge and Kane, Victoria stands alone as the most popular woman in wrestling. She has a niche going for her—the likeable girl next door."

—*Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz*

VISCERA

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'10"
WEIGHT: 496
HOMETOWN: Memphis, TN
YEARS PRO: 14
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWF World tag team, WWF hardcore, USWA Southern, World Wrestling Council universal, MCW North American
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 290 in 1993, 88 in 1994, 49 in 1995, 53 in 1996, 300 in 1997, 336 in 1998, 186 in 1999, 251 in 2000
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Made his wrestling debut along with his "brother" (the man soon to be known as Mo) in 1991 in the North Carolina-based Pro Wrestling Federation ... Later traveled to the USWA in Memphis ... At 6'10" and nearly 500 pounds, he quickly caught the eye of WWF talent scouts ... In 1993, Mabel (one of Viscera's early identities) and Mo signed with the WWF ... Dubbed Men on a Mission, Mabel and Mo were enormously popular with younger fans ... On March 29, 1994, Men on a Mission won the World tag team title in London, England ... They dropped the belts back to Quebecers Jacques Rougeau and Pierre Oulette just two days later ... Began competing on his own ... Mabel shocked the world by winning the 1995 King of the Ring Tournament, beating The Undertaker and Savio Vega ... Lost to World champ Diesel in the main event of SummerSlam 1995 ... Beat Carlos Colon for the WWC universal title on January 7, 1996 ... Defeated Brian Christopher for the USWA Southern title on March 25, 1996 ... Made a surprise return to the WWF at the 1999 Royal Rumble ... Kidnapped by Undertaker's Ministry of Darkness, brainwashed, and renamed Viscera ... *Very* briefly held the WWF hardcore title during the hardcore battle royal at WrestleMania 2000 ... Also won the MCW North American title in 2000 ... Showed up in TNA for all of two weeks in 2003, aligning with Ron Killings ... Made a surprise return to WWE in September 2004, attacking The Undertaker ... Signed with Raw ... Formed an alliance with Trish Stratus in April 2005 ... Enamored with Trish, Viscera gave everything he had to beating Kane at Backlash 2005 in order to earn some quality time with Trish, but came up short ... After the match, Viscera leveled Stratus, who had insulted him, with a big splash, much to the delight of fans.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Beating The Undertaker in a monumental upset at the 1995 King of the Ring Tournament (en route to winning the whole thing). That was a colossal first step in breaking away from the Men on a Mission days and becoming a legitimate World title contender.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Viscera is at his best when he can close the gap between himself and his opponent. If he can wrap his meaty arms around an opponent and begin to—quite literally—push his weight around, the match is just about won.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Let's face it, at just a couple of Big Macs under the 500-pound mark, Viscera doesn't have a lot of stamina. If he doesn't win a match in the first five minutes, he's not likely to win at all. But holding a 500-pound man off for more than five minutes is a formidable challenge.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Titles have never seemed to mean much to Viscera. At this stage of his career, he probably wants to face high-profile opponents who can test him. After 14 years in the sport, he wants to show he's more than a comedy act.

•••••VISCERA

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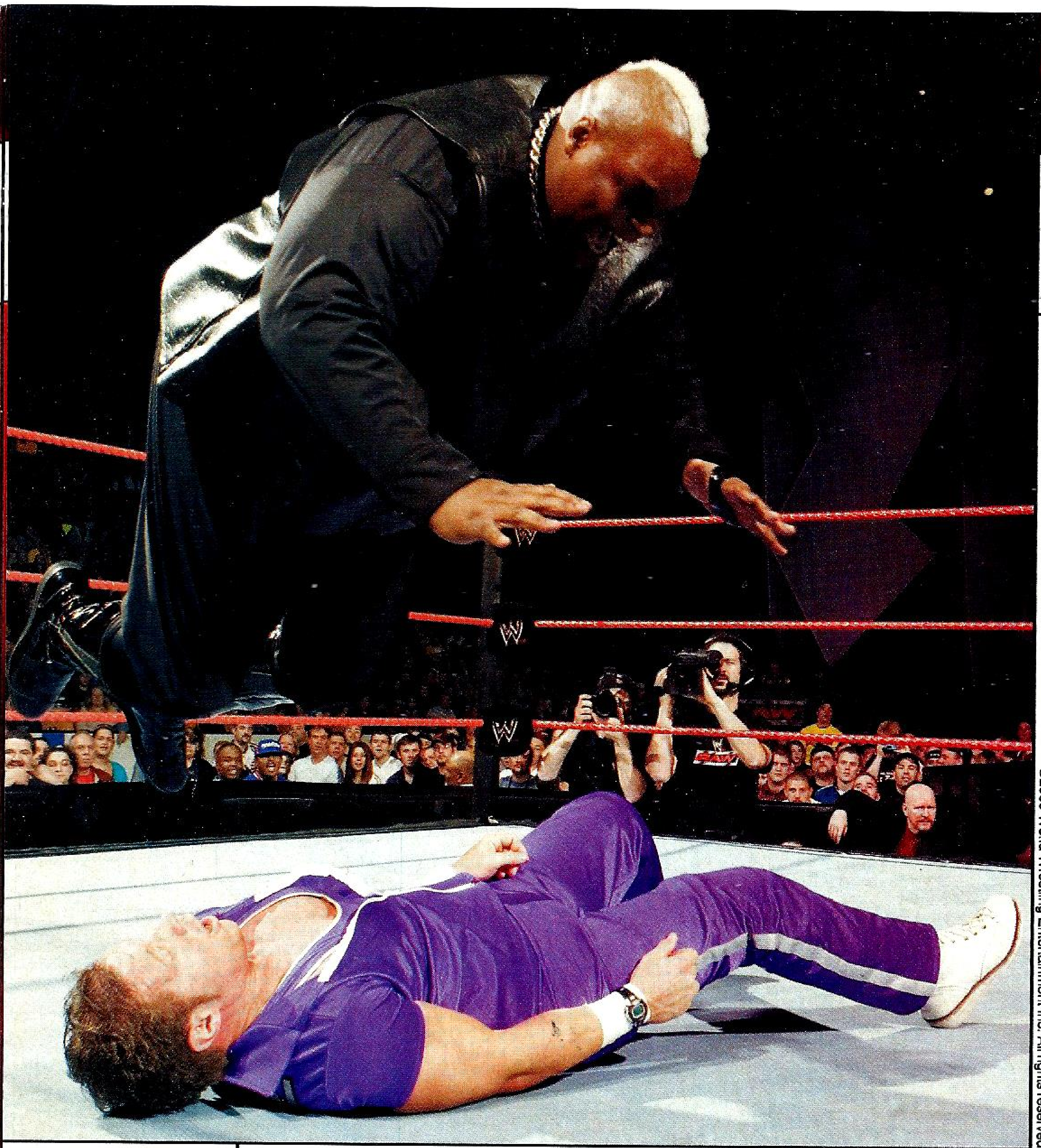

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Viscera drops his 496 pounds on Simon Dean

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WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Anyone trying to buy his services. From The Undertaker to JBL to Trish Stratus, Viscera always seems to be serving a different overlord. It's about time he develops his own career path and sticks to it.

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Hey, Viscera is a babyface (we think!) for the first time in years. He's also a big, big man. Come on ... wouldn't you love to see him line Trish Stratus up for a stinkface?

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Aligning himself with The Undertaker's Ministry in 1999. True, he was kidnapped and brainwashed, but it all worked out for the best. Instead of being a cartoon character rapper with a short shelf life, he became a menace and is, against all odds, hotter than ever 14 years into his career.

●●●●●

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

His Survivor Series 1993 match (as a Doink on a Mission) might well have been the worst match in the history of PPV. The Bushwhackers, Mo, Bastion Booger, and Samu never quite recovered from that debacle.

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WE SAID IT:

"I never ever thought I'd say this, but Viscera has become one of my favorite characters on the Raw roster. Call it a guilty pleasure. It's nice to see him catch a break."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"Viscera has been smart to basically take a break from wrestling every couple of years. It has helped him recharge his batteries and has prevented him from growing too stale. He's stretched out what many would consider a tired gimmick through almost 15 years. That's impressive."

—Publisher Stu Saks

"Viscera's never going to win a world title, but if he finds himself a good partner, he could become a player on the tag team scene. He and Gene Snitsky could be an interesting pair of freaks. Together, they might be ridiculous enough to mean something."

—Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz

The HURRICANE

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"

WEIGHT: 210

HOMETOWN: Raleigh, NC

YEARS PRO: 15

MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE European, WWE hardcore, WWE Raw tag team (2 times), WCW/WWE cruiserweight (2 times), WCW hardcore, CCWA light heavyweight, OMEGA tag team (2 times), WWO light heavyweight, SWA heavyweight, SCW tag team

"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 234 in 1999, 144 in 2000, 31 in 2001, 26 in 2002, 21 in 2003, 58 in 2004

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Most Improved (2nd runner-up in 2001)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Got his start as Kid Vicious on the Carolina indy circuit … As Shane Helms, feuded with The Hardy Boyz in OMEGA Pro … Teamed with Shannon Moore as The Bad Street Boys in NWA Worldwide … Formed the wannabe boy band Three Count with Moore and Evan Karagias in WCW … Defeated Chavo Guerrero Jr. for the WCW cruiserweight title just one week before WCW folded … "Sugar" Shane had his own Sugar Babies valets … Changed his name to Gregory Helms in WWE … Adopted the Hurricane persona shortly thereafter … Beat Matt Hardy for the European title in 2001 … Recruited Mighty Molly (Holly) as his superhero sidekick … Teamed with Kane to win the Raw tag belts in September 2002 … Pinned The Rock on the March 10, 2003, edition of *Raw* … Regained the tag title with his "superhero in training" partner, Rosey, (who's now a full-fledged superhero) in a gauntlet match at Backlash 2005 … Now also has Stacy Keibler as a valet.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

A passing comment from Steve Austin changed Gregory Helms' life forever. Austin

The Hurricane likes tangling with La Resistance

The HURRICANE

noticed Helms' Green Lantern tattoo and taunted the WWE newcomer, asking if he wanted to be a superhero. You could see the wheels turning in Helms' head. A few weeks later, The Hurricane was born.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Hurricane has an astounding ability to absorb punishment. He can take a stiff series of moves and get back up swinging.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Hurricane frequently gets overpowered early in matches, which isn't surprising when you consider that he would be small for a cruiserweight, yet almost exclusively faces heavyweights. Although he's usually able to recover (see "strongest part of his matches"), he would be better served to either bulk up a bit or better utilize his speed through stick-and-move tactics and thus avoid taking so many beatings.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Wrestlers known to take themselves too seriously. To stars like Muhammad Hassan, Chris Masters, and La Resistance, Hurricane's goofy antics make him an affront to the sport of wrestling, and an indirect insult to them as wrestlers. Those stuck-up types usually try to teach Hurricane a lesson, and more often than not, the masked man gets to laugh last.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Frankly, there aren't many people Hurricane needs to avoid, because he's almost always the underdog. If he loses a match, fans quickly forget about it because of his charisma and because he undoubtedly put in a game effort. Strange as it seems, a loss to Triple-H or a win over Simon Dean pretty much leaves Hurricane in the same position.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

The vertebreaker. His devastating WCW finisher doesn't fly in the toned-down WWE, but it was breathtaking. Helms positioned his opponent as if setting up for a pedigree, turned around, hooked his opponent's arms from the rear, and rotated his torso, positioning his opponent upside-down on Helms' back. Then Helms sat out, bringing all his weight *and* his opponent's squarely onto his neck and shoulders. Brutal!

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

He committed himself to his Hurricane gimmick and made it one of the most entertaining characters in all of wrestling.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Trusting Mighty Molly (Holly). She broke his heart.

WE SAID IT:

"Hurricane is a novelty act. To his credit, he has avoided getting *too* stale over the past few years, but unless he drastically overhauls his image one of these days, I can't see him going much further than where he is today."

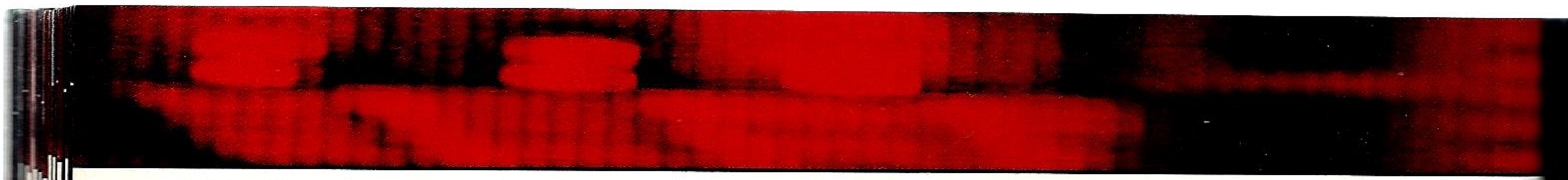
—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"I've come to enjoy The Hurricane character a bit, but I still wish we could have seen the Shane Helms who tore up the WCW cruiserweight division in WWE. Bring back his Sugar Babies valets and his vertebreaker finisher and let's see how he'd fare against Smackdown's cruisers."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

"Hurricane is a true tag team expert. Like William Regal, he has a future forming these 'odd couple' teams and taking them to the tag title."

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin



John Bradshaw LAYFIELD

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'7"
WEIGHT: 309
HOMETOWN: Roscoe, TX
YEARS PRO: 13
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Smackdown, WWE World tag team (3 times), WWE European, WWE hardcore (17 times), Global Wrestling Federation tag team (2 times)
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 301 in 1993, 210 in 1994, 327 in 1995, 150 in 1996, 173 in 1997, 102 in 1998, 78 in 1999, 87 in 2000, 45 in 2001, 36 in 2002, 15 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Most Improved (3rd runner-up in 2004), Most Hated (1st runner-up in 2004), Tag Team (3rd runner-up, with Faarooq, in 2001)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

It took JBL more than a decade to become an overnight sensation ... Trained under Olympian Brad Rheingans and made his pro debut in 1992, competing in the Global Wrestling Federation and other Texas-based promotions as John Hawk ... Teamed with Bobby Duncum Jr. as The Texas Mustangs and won the GWF tag belts twice ... Beat Kevin Von Erich for the NWA North American title in January 1993 ... Toured Germany with Otto Wanz' Catch Wrestling Association in 1995 ... Entered the WWF as Justin "Hawk" Bradshaw, managed by Uncle Zebekiah (Dutch Mantel) ... Had some singles success and then formed a team with Barry Windham—The New Blackjacks ... Beat NWA North American champion Jeff Jarrett by DQ at No Way Out 1998 ... Defeated Vader at the 1998 Break Down PPV ... Formed a team with Faarooq (Ron Simmons) and joined The Undertaker's Ministry of Darkness ... 'Taker named his new allies his Acolytes ... The Acolytes won two WWF tag titles in 1999, beating Kane and X-Pac and then The Hardy Boyz and Michael Hayes in a handicap match ... In January 2000, Faarooq and Bradshaw went to work for themselves, forming the Acolyte Protection Agency ... The APA took a break from beer drinking and gambling to regain the WWF tag belts by beating the Dudleys on July 9, 2001 ... When Faarooq went out with an injury, Bradshaw won the European title, followed by an incredible 17 hardcore titles throughout 2002 ... Underwent surgery to repair a torn biceps muscle ... Won the APA Barroom Brawl at Vengeance 2003 ... Became extremely wealthy through his financial investments and began going by his "proper name" of John Bradshaw Layfield ... Beat Eddie Guerrero to win the Smackdown title at the 2004 Great American Bash ... Hired his "Cabinet" of Orlando Jordan and The Basham Brothers to help him keep his title ... Defended the title against Guerrero, Booker T, The Big Show, Kurt Angle, and The Undertaker ... Managed to beat The Big Show in WWE's first-ever barbed-wire steel cage match at No Way Out 2005 when he was slammed through the ring and crawled out from under the ring to the floor ... Finally lost the belt after a nine-month run, falling to John Cena at WrestleMania 21 ... Obsessed with regaining *his* championship.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Easy. He became the least likely world champion in WWE since Vince McMahon by upsetting Eddie Guerrero at last year's Great American Bash.

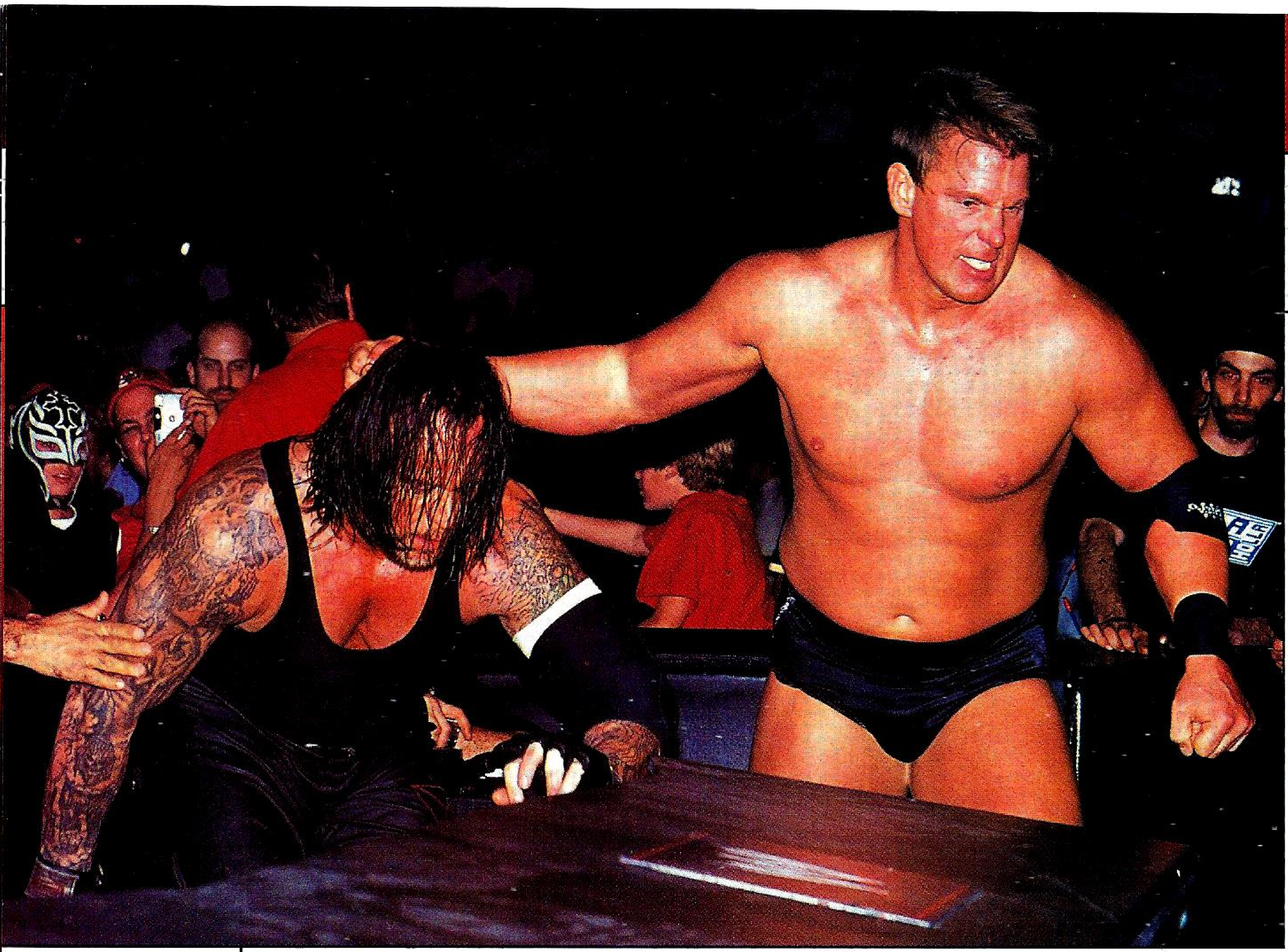
STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Infuriates his opponents so much that they abandon their game plans, giving JBL openings to dominate.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Most of his bouts are marred by outside interference or other chicanery. He relies so

••••• John Bradshaw
LAYFIELD



JBL goes on the attack against the 'Taker

much on it that he tends to have lapses in the middle of his matches.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Smaller, less experienced competitors that are easy to intimidate and bully.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Wrestlers renowned for their patience and intestinal fortitude and those who don't back down from a fight.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

JBL could stand to drop 20 pounds to improve his cardiovascular conditioning. It's time for the former Acolyte to switch to low-carb light beer.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Acknowledging his stock market gains and rebuilding his image as the 21st century "Million-Dollar Man."

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

The infamous Nazi goosestep/salute on the 2004 German tour wasn't too bright. He's lucky he wasn't fired by WWE before he could become champion.

WE SAID IT:

"The emergence of JBL as a main event talent was one of the most enjoyable events of 2004. It's nice to see an intelligent veteran rise to the top over all these cookie-cutter muscle heads."

—Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz

"JBL has been a guilty pleasure. He's a competent brawler and a surprisingly good interview subject. If he can recover from dropping the belt to John Cena, he could be a top star for the next few years."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

"Bradshaw—I hate to have to call him JBL—is an old-fashioned brawler, but I wish he'd give up on this 'wrestling god' thing and get back to beating guys up. He could be the next Stan Hansen if he applied himself more."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

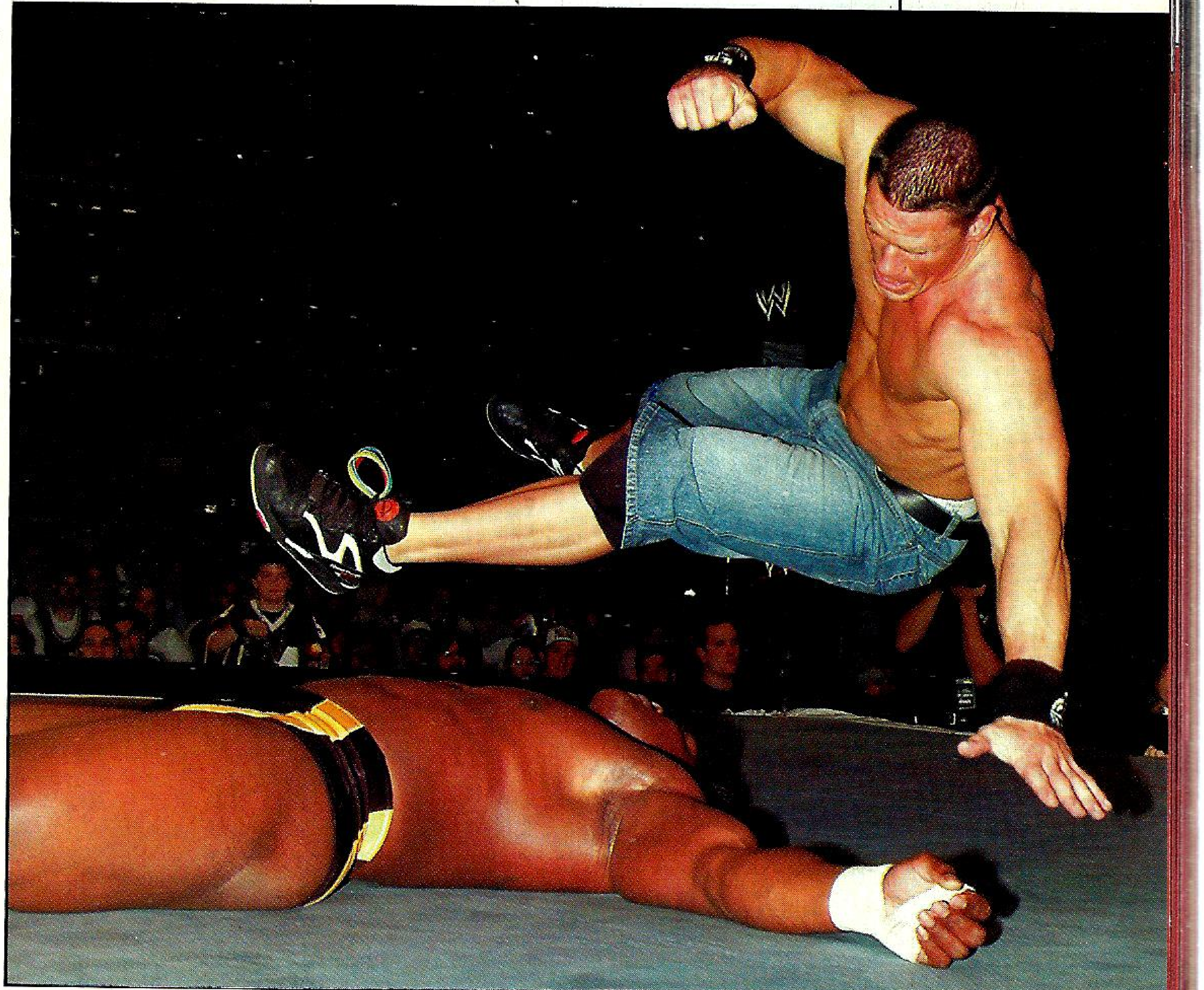
John CENA

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'3"
WEIGHT: 260
HOMETOWN: West Newbury, MA
YEARS PRO: 4
MAJOR TITLES WON: UPW heavyweight, OVW Southern tag team, OVW heavyweight, WWE U.S. (3 times), WWE Smackdown
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 281 in 2001, 46 in 2002, 12 in 2003, 7 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Most Popular (2004), Most Improved (2003), Rookie (3rd runner-up in 2001)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Made his wrestling debut for Rick Bassman's California-based Universal Pro Wrestling promotion ... Adopted the ring name of The Prototype, as in the perfect man ... Beat Smelly to win the UPW heavyweight title on April 27, 2000 ... Signed a developmental deal and moved to OVW in the spring of 2001 ... Teamed with Rico Costantino to win the OVW Southern tag title ... Used plenty of outside interference to beat Leviathan (Batista) for the OVW heavyweight title on February 20, 2002 ... Made his WWE TV debut by answering an open challenge from Kurt Angle and losing a very competitive bout ... Ditched his clean-cut image and turned heel as a freestyle rapper, eventually feuding with Brock Lesnar over the Smackdown title ... Became a fan favorite again when he joined Team Angle against Team Lesnar at the 2003 Survivor Series ... Beat The Big Show to win the U.S. title in the opening match of WrestleMania XX, dropping the 500-pounder with his FU finisher ... Stripped of the title by then-GM Angle ... Regained the belt by winning a best-of-five series against Booker T ... Was out of action for several months after being stabbed in a nightclub, an incident orchestrated by archrival Carlito Caribbean Cool ... Conveniently used his time off to film a movie called *The Marine* ... Won third U.S. title by beating Carlito ... Lost that belt in a controversial match against Orlando Jordan when JBL interfered ... Defeated JBL to win the Smackdown title at WrestleMania 21.



Cena drops in (with his fist) on Orlando Jordan

SOLDIER
YOU WANT SOME
KEES

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DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Beat JBL to win the Smackdown title at WrestleMania 21.

●●●●●
STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Cena is at his best in the first three to four minutes of most matches. His offense can be explosive, but if opponents can weather that initial storm, Cena tends to find himself in trouble for a few moments.

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WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

He spends too much time playing up to his Chain Gang and taunting his opponents. That often gives those opponents time to recover and inspires them to fight back harder to put a stop to the verbal abuse.

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WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Cena is all set for a long title run if he can feast on a steady diet of one-dimensional villains like Hulk Hogan faced during his first WWF title run. Put him in the ring against Luther Reigns, The Big Show, JBL, and Matt Morgan, and Cena could be on top for a long time.

●●●●●
WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Cena does very well against strikers (like Booker T) and brawlers (JBL, The Big Show), but he has yet to be seriously tested by more well-rounded competitors like Eddie Guerrero or Chris Benoit. Cena would likely have trouble against a strong technical wrestler with good stamina, such as Kurt Angle.

●●●●●
SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

"The Doctor Of Thuganomics" should consider adding a new finisher that best utilizes his upper body strength, such as a power bomb or full-nelson slam. His FU is just a glorified bodyslam, and it might not be enough to put away some world championship-caliber opponents. Then what does Cena do?

●●●●●
SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Although his "Doctor Of Thuganomics" image change alienated some fans, Cena became a star by embracing his rap skills and adopting a street thug persona. Next thing you knew, he had spinning title belts and a hip-hop CD.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

We'd really be nitpicking if we tried to convince you that Cena has made any glaring mistakes. Becoming a world champion and arguably WWE's most popular wrestler in just four years is the prototype for an outstanding career.

●●●●●
WE SAID IT:

"Cena is still a star on the rise, but the pressure is really going to be on him now that he's a world champion. He could stand to add another element to his game to ensure his longevity on top."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"I can't say I care for the whole rapper thing, but I can't argue with Cena's success. Beneath that hip-hop veneer, Cena is a heck of a wrestler. He could be the man to carry this sport over the next five years."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"There are going to be a lot of distractions for Cena in the next few months, with his CD coming out and doing the publicity rounds as WWE Smackdown champion. He's going to have to remain focused and not let the pressures as champion bring him down."

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

The Basham BROTHERS

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'3" (Danny); 6'2" (Doug)
WEIGHT: 251 (Danny); 252 (Doug)
HOMETOWN: Seymour, IN (Danny); Louisville, KY (Doug)
YEARS PRO: 6 (Danny); 12 (Doug)
MAJOR TITLES WON: OVW Southern tag team (3 times), OVW heavyweight (3 times), Smackdown tag team (2 times) (Danny); OVW Southern tag team (3 times), OVW heavyweight (4 times); Smackdown tag team (2 times) (Doug)
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 282 in 2000, 323 in 2001, 173 in 2002, 65 in 2003, 67 in 2004 (Danny); 475 in 1994, 438 in 1995, 157 in 2002, 51 in 2003, 63 in 2004 (Doug)
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Doug Basham was trained by his uncle, veteran Danny Davis, and debuted in 1992 ... By the late-1990s, Doug was one of the top stars in Ohio Valley Wrestling, before it was part of the WWE developmental system ... Won his first OVW heavyweight title on July 5, 1998 ... Feuded with the colorful Rip Rogers over that title ... Reinvented himself as The Machine in 2001, wearing a leather bondage mask to hide his identity ... Danny debuted in OVW in 1999 as The Damaja ... Danny won the Southern tag title twice with David C and then won the OVW heavyweight title by beating Nick "Eugene" Dinsmore in 1999 ... The Machine recruited Damaja for his Revolution group in 2001, and the two instantly jelled as a tag team, beating Dinsmore and Rob Conway for the Southern tag belts ... Doug and Danny eventually began feuding, as each lusted after the OVW title ... Around that time, they were signed by WWE and for several months were in the uncomfortable position of being mortal enemies in OVW and partners in WWE ... Signed Shaniqua as their dominatrix/manager in WWE ... Defeated Eddie and Chavo Guerrero Jr. to win the Smackdown tag title on October 21, 2003 ... Lost the belts in an upset to Rikishi and Scotty Too Hotty ... Dumped Shaniqua and joined JBL as part of his Cabinet ... Regained the tag belts on January 11, 2005, only to lose them less than six weeks later to Eddie Guerrero and Rey Misterio Jr. ... Now that they and JBL are without belts, signs of dissension are becoming apparent in the Cabinet.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Beating the Guerreros to win the Smackdown tag title for the first time. Some observers felt the "brothers" were too bland and not ready to succeed at the WWE level. Doug and Danny proved those doubters wrong, even if they got help by the fact that Eddie and Chavo weren't getting along.

STRONGEST PART OF THEIR MATCHES:

The Bashams excel later in bouts, when they are able to switch places and sneak the fresh man into the ring while the referee's back is turned. It's an old trick, but it almost always gives them the advantage.

WEAKEST PART OF THEIR MATCHES:

The Bashams often fall into a hole early and take a beating in the opening minutes. Maybe their individual egos—which have clashed plenty of times in the past—prevent them from developing a solid game plan until the pressure is on.

WHOM THEY WANT TO FACE:

Ideally, pairings that don't have much experience as a tag team so they can use their experience, double-teams, and quick switches to their full advantage. More experienced teams are often able to thwart such tactics.

WHOM THEY OUGHT TO AVOID:

The Bashams need to remember that they are more than JBL's hired goons. They should

The Basham BROTHERS

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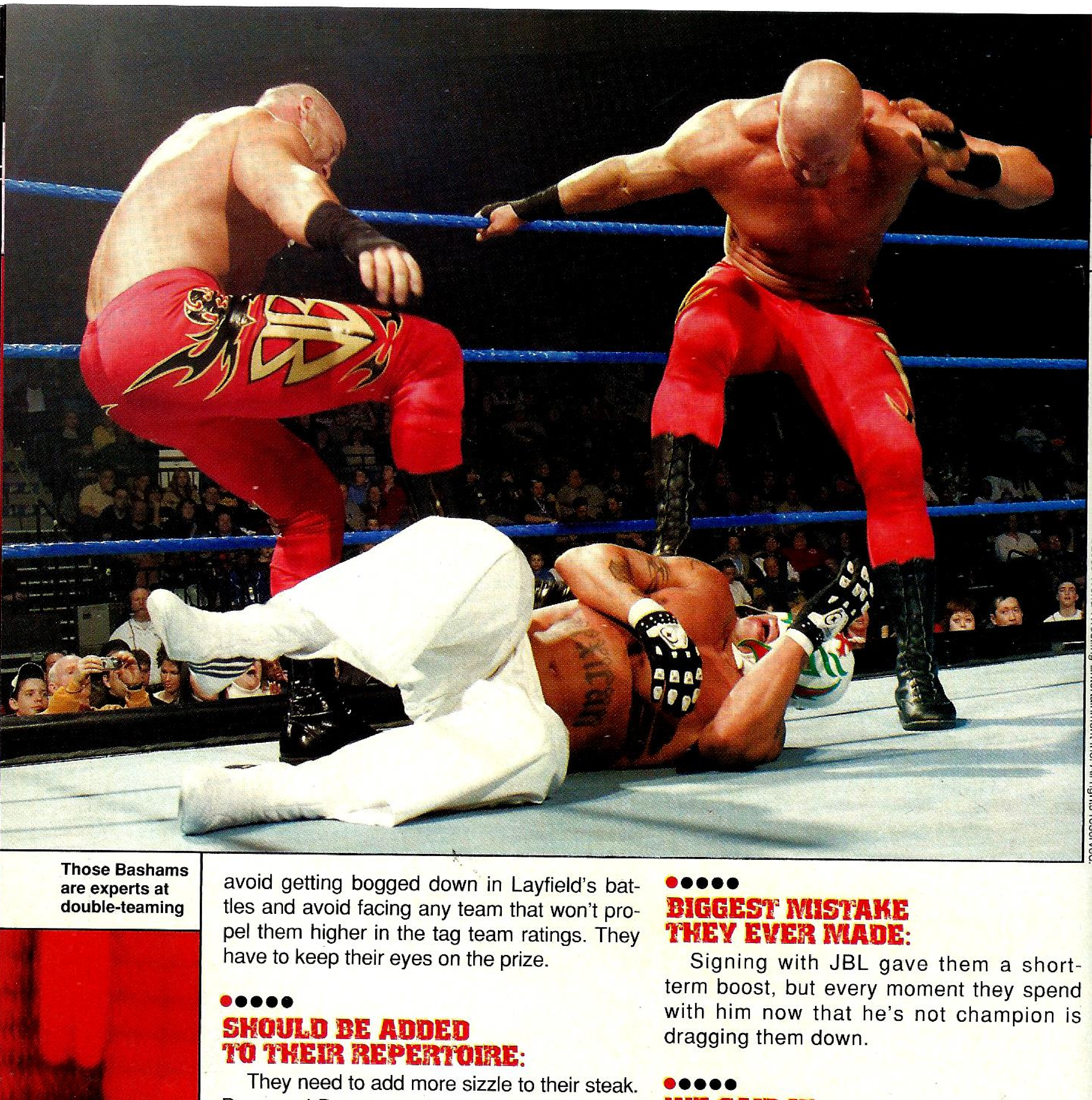

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Those Bashams are experts at double-teaming

avoid getting bogged down in Layfield's battles and avoid facing any team that won't propel them higher in the tag team ratings. They have to keep their eyes on the prize.

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO THEIR REPERTOIRE:

They need to add more sizzle to their steak. Doug and Danny are as fundamentally solid a team as you're likely to find, but so far in their WWE run, they have come across as meek and low-key. They need to add something to set them apart from the rest, be it more aggression in the ring, more incendiary promos, or a knockout double-team finisher.

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SMARTEST MOVE THEY EVER MADE:

Trading in the bondage gear for regulation wrestling gear. The black leather may have been a good idea to get people talking, but it wore out quickly. Changing their look made people see they weren't just another novelty act.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE THEY EVER MADE:

Signing with JBL gave them a short-term boost, but every moment they spend with him now that he's not champion is dragging them down.

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WE SAID IT:

"They might be better off as singles competitors. I could see both as threats to win the Intercontinental title at some point. Maybe not now, but within a year or two."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

"The Bashams and M-N-M are my favorite two teams in wrestling today. I'd just like to see Doug and Danny show some personality. It's there, but they have to show everybody it's there."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"Talented young kids who could use either a change of scenery to Raw just for the sake of change or a decent manager if they can find one these days."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

Billy KIDMAN

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'11"
WEIGHT: 215
HOMETOWN: Allentown, PA
YEARS PRO: 11
MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW/WWE cruiserweight (7 times), East Coast Wrestling Association tag team, WCW World tag team (2 times), WCW cruiserweight tag team, WWE Smackdown tag team
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 202 in 1997, 132 in 1998, 31 in 1999, 72 in 2000, 38 in 2001, 53 in 2002, 78 in 2003, 92 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Prized pupil of Afa the Wild Samoan made his pro debut in 1994 ... Competed as The Kid and Kid Flash early on in his career... Won the ECWA tag title with Ace Darling in 1995 ... Debuted in WCW in 1996 ... Joined Raven's Flock and unveiled his shooting star press, then known as the seven-year itch ... Beat Juventud Guerrera for the WCW cruiserweight title in September 1998 ... Won that title three times in WCW and another four times when it became the WWE cruiserweight title, making him one of wrestling's most decorated cruiserweights ... Teamed with Rey Misterio Jr. to beat Dean Malenko and Chris Benoit for the WCW tag belts in 1999 ... Won the WCW tag belts with Konnan later that year ... Joined the New Blood faction and feuded with Hulk Hogan, but fared poorly ... Married long-time girlfriend Torrie Wilson in July 2003 ... Inducted into the ECWA Hall of Fame in 2004 ... Won the Smackdown tag title with Paul London in July 2004 ... After accidentally injuring Chavo Guerrero Jr. with his shooting star press, Kidman lost confidence and

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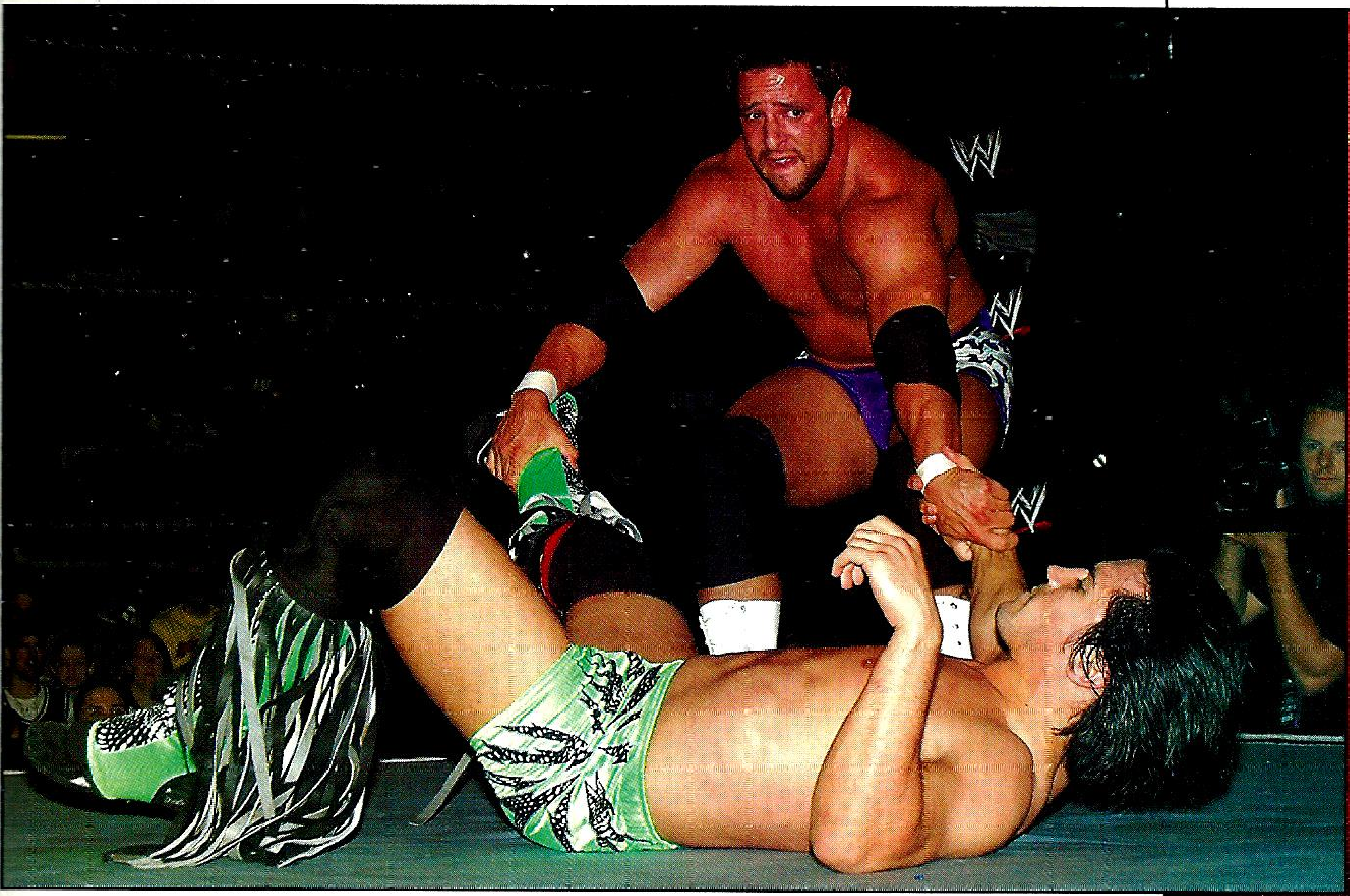
Kidman sets up a spectacular shooting star press



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Billy KIDMAN

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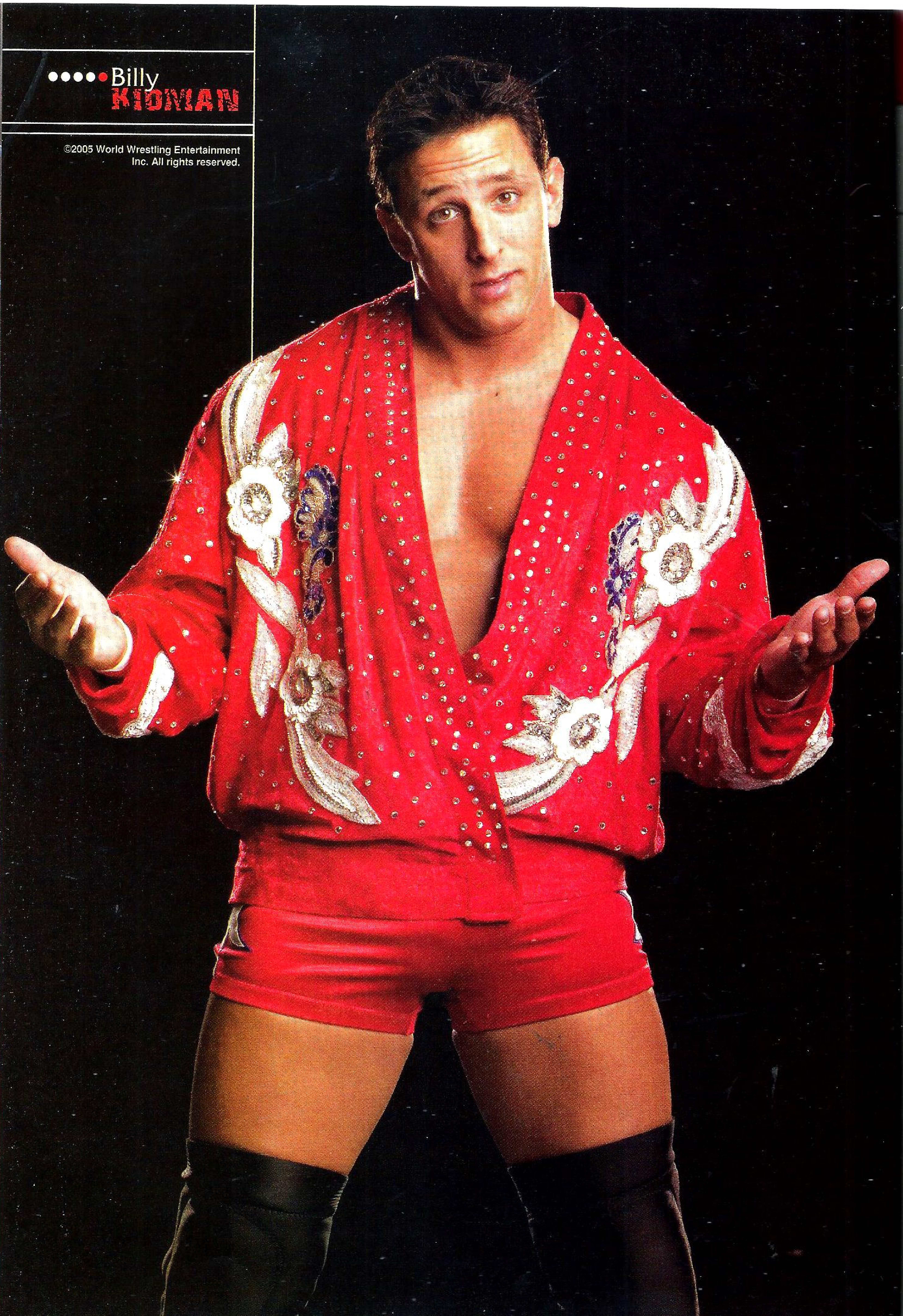


walked out on London, costing the team the belts … Beat London at No Mercy 2004 … Has lost several rematches against London in recent months, but remains committed to getting the best of his former partner.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

To be honest, Kidman's career has been lacking in truly defining moments. There were moments that *should* have been defining, such as his big feud with Hulk Hogan, his seven cruiserweight title victories, and his Smackdown tag title win with Paul London. But for a variety of reasons, Kidman never seemed capable of sustaining momentum following any of those potentially career-making achievements. Kidman's defining career moment hasn't happened yet … and it might never happen.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Kidman is at his best when he has some time with which to work. He's not particularly explosive at any point, preferring to wear down opponents over the course of longer matches. This has hurt him in the cruiserweight opens and other multiple-man matches that move at a faster pace. Kidman excels seven to 10 minutes into his matches.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

He often wrestles without much intensity. He should remember the old boxing axiom that sometimes *how you win* is more important than just winning. Style does count.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Kidman should seek out the best cruiserweights and really bear down and try to establish himself as a cruiserweight legend killer. Rey Misterio Jr., Paul London, Chavo Guerrero Jr., and the recently signed Psicosis, Super Crazy, and Juventud Guerrera would be ideal targets.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Anyone that could take his focus off the cruiserweights. Kidman could prove to be WWE's dominant cruiser and then step up and pursue the U.S. title, but he should walk before he tries to run.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

How about a DDT? It's an effective finisher that can be executed at almost any time. The shooting star press—while dramatic and potentially spectacular—requires a lot of setup, and opponents can always roll away or lift their knees.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Marrying Torrie Wilson. *Duh!*

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Walking out on London. Kidman and London could have been an exciting, long-lasting team and given the WWE tag ranks a huge boost, but Kidman bailed before the tandem took off.

WE SAID IT:

"Kidman is one of the most underappreciated talents in the sport. He needs to start blowing his own horn more. It's not too late for him to make a huge impact in WWE."

— Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

"I think Kidman's been subconsciously sabotaging his own career for years now. Every time he catches a break, he makes a boneheaded move and blows it. Maybe he's just afraid of success for some reason."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Kidman has plenty of talent, but he needs to develop a killer instinct or let some of his personality come to the surface. No one likes a generic superstar, and he looks as generic as just about anyone in WWE."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

The Big SHOW

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 7'2"
WEIGHT: 485
HOMETOWN: Aiken, SC
YEARS PRO: 10
MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW World, WCW World tag team (2 times), WWE World tag team (2 times), WWE hardcore (3 times), WWE U.S., WWE World, WWE Smackdown
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 2 in 1996, 8 in 1997, 31 in 1998, 34 in 1999, 16 in 2000, 72 in 2001, 49 in 2002, 6 in 2003, 41 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Wrestler (1996), Tag Team (3rd runner-up, with Lex Luger, in 1997), Rookie (1996), Most Hated (3rd runner-up in 1996)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Trained under Larry Sharpe and made his pro debut in 1995 ... Debuted in WCW as The Giant a short time later, accosting Hulk Hogan on a movie set and claiming to be the son of Andre the Giant ... Beat Hogan by DQ at Halloween Havoc 1995, his first WCW match ... Signed with Jimmy Hart's Dungeon of Doom ... Later became a fan favorite and cleanly beat Ric Flair to win the WCW World heavyweight title on April 22, 1996 ... Named Rookie of the Year and Wrestler of the Year by *PWI* readers in 1996 ... Joined the New World Order but was dropped from the group in 1997 ... Teamed with Lex Luger to beat Hogan and Dennis Rodman at Bash at the Beach 1997 ... Won the WCW tag title with Sting and with Scott Hall in 1998 ... In 1999, he left WCW and signed an almost unheard-of 10-year contract with the WWF ... Debuted at the St. Valentine's Day Massacre PPV, coming up through the ring to try to save Vince McMahon in his steel cage match against Steve Austin ... Joined McMahon's evil Corporation and adopted the name The Big Show ... Feuded with Mick Foley ... Won the WWF tag title with The Undertaker twice in the summer of 1999, but was abandoned by "The Dead Man" ... Was inserted into the three-way main event of the 1999 Survivor Series when Austin was run down by a car ... Won the WWF World title that night, beating The Rock and Triple-H ... Had the most intense feud of his career against Big Bossman after the Cobb County, Georgia, prison guard, a ridiculous feud that saw Bossman bodysnatch the corpse of Show's father (you read that right) ... Competed in the four-way World title main event at WrestleMania 2000 ... Started goofing off in the summer of 2000, comically imitating Hogan, Rikishi, and others ... Set his sights on the hardcore title in the spring of 2001, winning that belt twice ... Rejoined the NWO in WWE, but this stint was even shorter than his WCW run, as the NWO quickly disintegrated ... Moved from Raw to Smackdown in October 2002 ... Surprised everyone by signing Paul Heyman as his agent and using Heyman's interference to unseat Brock Lesnar for the Smackdown title at the 2002 Survivor Series ... Under Heyman, Show perhaps came closest to living up to his awesome potential ... Beat Eddie Guerrero to win the U.S. title at No Mercy 2003 ... Dropped that title to John Cena at WrestleMania XX ... Got his head shaved by Kurt Angle in the summer of 2004 ... Lost to sumo great Akebono in a featured bout at WrestleMania 21 ... Currently one of the top contenders to the Smackdown title.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

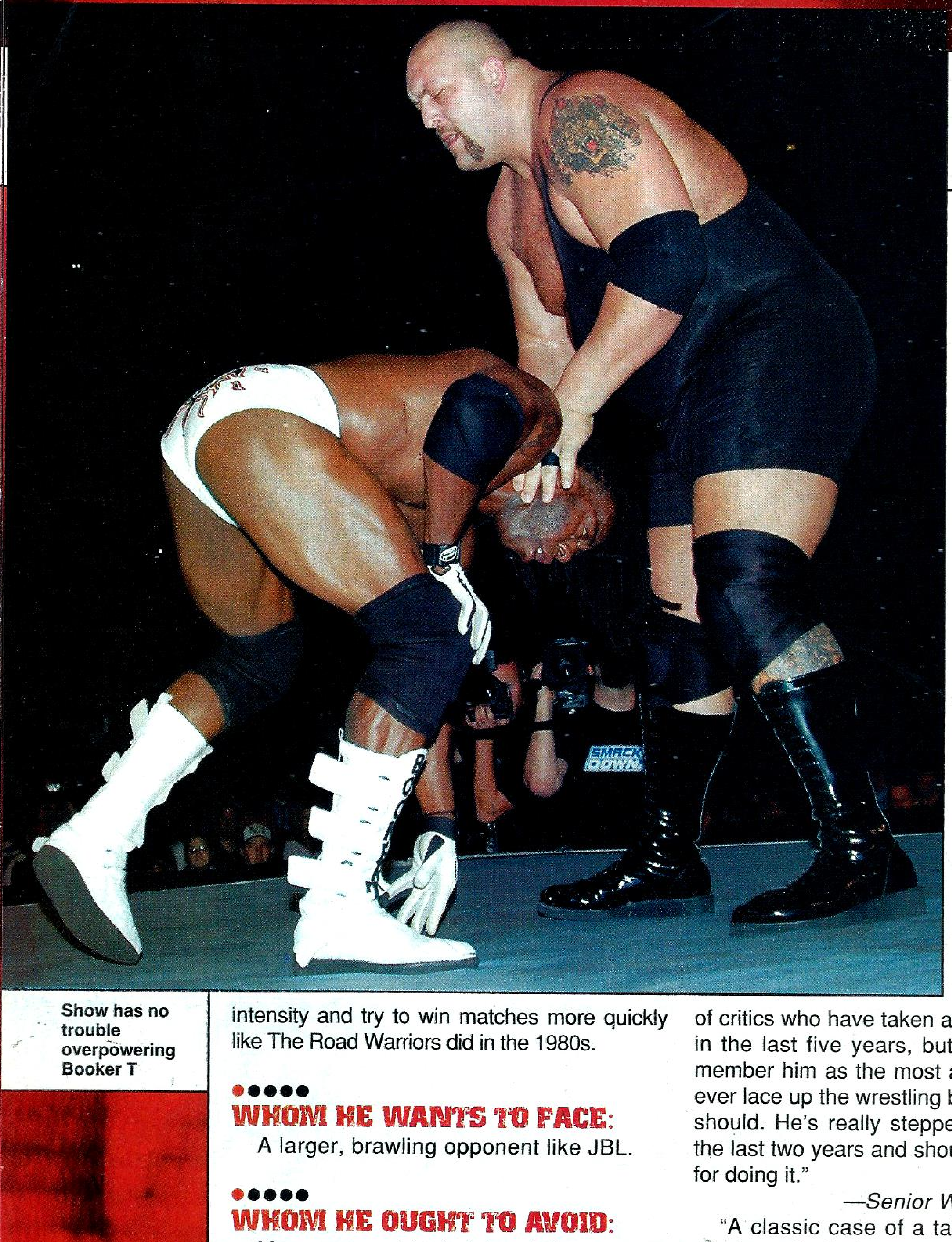
Cleanly pinned Ric Flair to win the WCW World title during his rookie year. It showed he planned to be more than a special attraction in his career.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Incredible physical strength and sheer body mass forces opponents to employ new strategies, making matches more intriguing.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Matches tend to be slow and plodding in pace and lack drama. He could pick up the



Show has no trouble overpowering Booker T

intensity and try to win matches more quickly like The Road Warriors did in the 1980s.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

A larger, brawling opponent like JBL.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

More compact technicians who can use their speed to evade him and their scientific skills to take him off his feet.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Focus. His 10-year contract has given him a sense of entitlement, allowing him to lose sight of his career goals for long stretches at a time.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Jumping from WCW to the WWF in 1999 at the height of the Monday night wars. His 10-year deal left him financially secure and dealt a giant-sized blow to WCW.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Claiming to be Andre the Giant's long-lost son, setting the stage for him to forever be compared to Andre.

WE SAID IT:

"Show has a lot of critics who have taken a lot of shots at him in the last five years, but history might remember him as the most athletic big man to ever lace up the wrestling boots. Or at least it should. He's really stepped up his game in the last two years and should get more credit for doing it."

—*Senior Writer Dan Murphy*

"A classic case of a talented wrestler in dire need of old-fashioned managerial guidance."

—*Senior Writer Harry Burkett*

"No one doubts Show is good. But at his size, he should be absolutely dominant. That's why I'm afraid he'll never shake the tag of being an underachiever. But I guess he has enough years left to prove me wrong."

—*Contributing Writer Matt Brock*

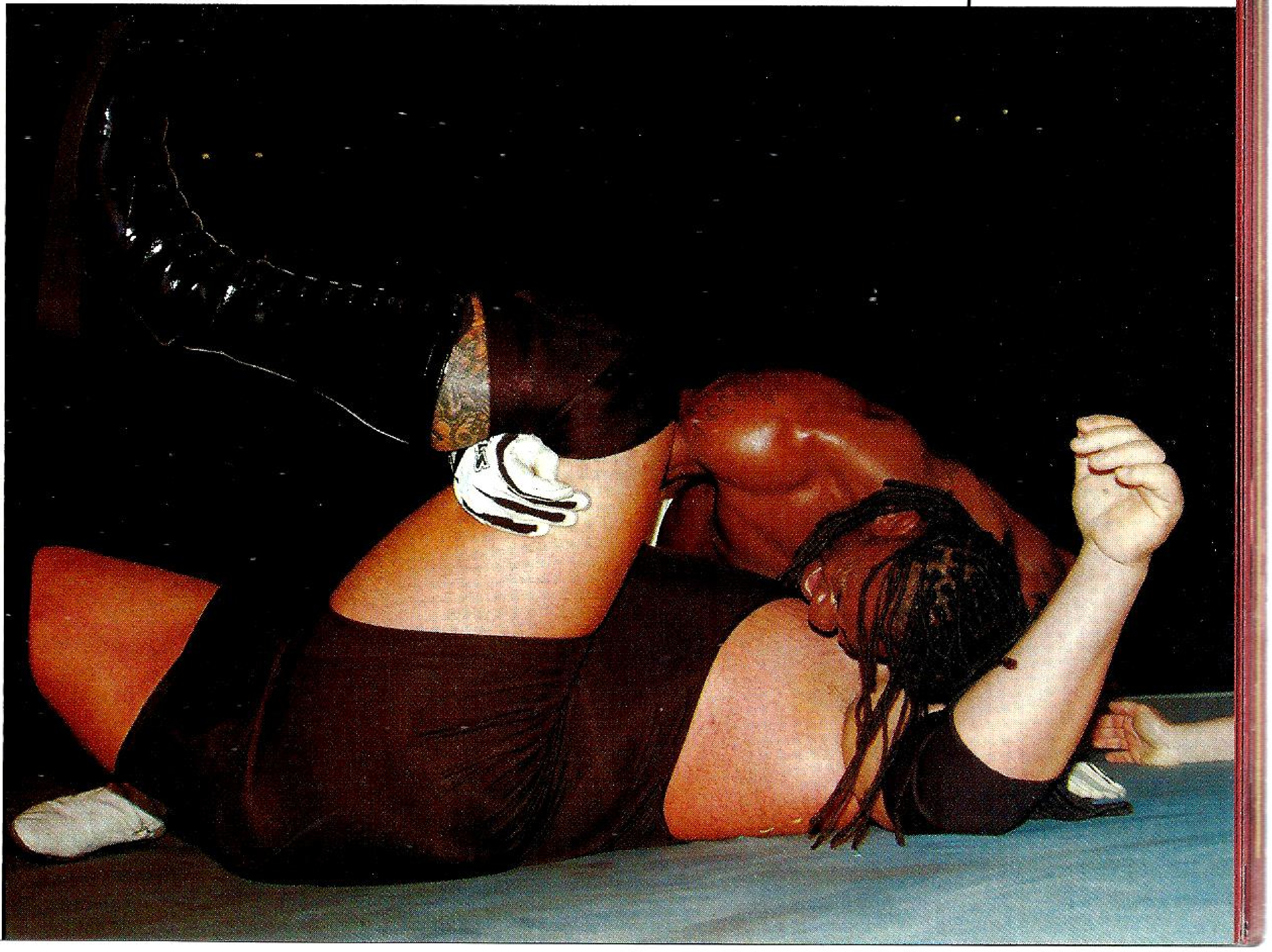
BOOKER T ●●●●●

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'3"
WEIGHT: 250
HOMETOWN: Houston, TX
YEARS PRO: 16
MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW World (5 times), WCW World tag team (11 times), WCW TV (6 times), WCW/WWE U.S. (2 times), WWE Raw tag team (3 times), WWE Intercontinental, WWE hardcore (2 times), Global Wrestling Federation tag team (2)
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 390 in 1991, 200 in 1992, 182 in 1993, 260 in 1994, 89 in 1995, 86 in 1996, 84 in 1997, 7 in 1998, 60 in 1999, 61 in 2000, 5 in 2001, 14 in 2002, 7 in 2003, 24 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Wrestler of the Year (2nd runner-up in 2000), Tag Team (with Stevie Ray, 1995, 1996; 2nd runner-up, with Stevie Ray, in 1999; 1st runner-up, with Goldust, in 2002), Match (2nd runner-up in 1995), Feud (1st runner-up in 2001; 2nd runner-up in 2000), Most Popular (2nd runner-up in 2002), Most Hated (1st runner-up in 2001), Most Improved (1998), Comeback (2nd runner-up in 2001), Inspirational (2000)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Booker T is one of wrestling's most decorated stars, both in terms of titles won and *PWI* Achievement Awards voting ... Made his pro debut as G.I. Bro in Houston in 1989 ... Teamed with his brother, Stevie Ray, as The Ebony Experience in the Global Wrestling Federaiton ... Signed with WCW in 1993, and The Ebony Experience became Harlem Heat ... Harlem Heat became one of the most dominant teams of the 1990s, winning the WCW World tag team title a record 10 times ... When Stevie suffered an injury, Booker tried his hand at singles wrestling, beating Disco Inferno for the TV title in December 1997 ... Briefly reverted back to his G.I. Bro persona in 2000 (thanks, Vince Russo) ... Won his first WCW World title by beating Jeff Jarrett at Bash at the Beach 2000 ... Went on the win that championship five times ... Joined WWE in 2001 (months after what was left of WCW was gobbled up by the McMahons), bringing the old WCW title with him ... Feuded with The Rock in the biggest "interpromotional" feud of the WCW invasion ... Has won the I-C and U.S. belts, as well as tag titles with Test, Goldust, and Rob Van Dam ... Complained about being traded from Raw to Smackdown in 2004 ... Feuded with JBL over the Smackdown title,



Booker puts Big Show down for the count

but failed to win the belt ... Married former *Nitro* Girl Sharmell Sullivan (Paisley) in 2005 ... One of Smackdown's most popular competitors.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

When Booker T beat Chris Benoit in a best-of-five series in 1998, he did more than simply become the top contender to the WCW TV title. He also emerged as a legitimate singles competitor and began his climb into wrestling's top tier.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Booker is the rare wrestler who can be explosive throughout a match, yet still have plenty of energy in reserve in case the match goes long. He is most dangerous in the opening minutes, but can connect with a scissors kick and change the momentum of a match at any time.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

The Book is prone to outside distractions, be it opponents threatening or insulting his wife, Sharmell, or another wrestler jumping up onto the apron to run interference. He has to remember to worry about securing the victory before allowing himself to be distracted and costing himself the match.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Booker may be a five-time WCW World champion, but he has yet to win a world championship in WWE. He wants to face John Cena, Batista, or anyone else who ends up wearing a world title belt.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

He shouldn't allow anyone to use him as a steppingstone. Every match he takes should move him closer to that elusive world title. Otherwise, he's wasting his time.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A manager and not a valet. Booker is flirting with the idea of making Sharmell a permanent addition to his corner. He should realize she will only hinder him in the long run. A good manager could prevent interference and keep him focused. Maybe he should give Paul Heyman a ring.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Walking away from Harlem Heat in favor of a singles career. It had to be a tough choice personally, but it was the right professional choice to make.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Does *anyone* understand what G.I. Bro was all about? Vince Russo?

WE SAID IT:

"Booker is a great striker with good stamina, and he has faced almost every great wrestler of the past five to 10 years. I'd consider him one of the top 10 wrestlers in the world today."

—*Senior Writer Dan Murphy*

"No one made out better in the sale of WCW to Vince McMahon than The Book. He's a perennial main event talent, even when he gets stuck in mid-card matches for a spell."

—*Senior Writer Harry Burkett*

"Booker T always seems to be on the cusp of real greatness, but he needs something to give him that final push. I'd hate to see his window of opportunity close without him making his move, but it had better happen soon because even he says retirement is looming."

—*Senior Writer Will Welsh*

The Dudley BOYZ

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'2" (Buh Buh); 6'1" (D-Von)
WEIGHT: 319 (Buh Buh); 260 (D-Von)
HOMETOWN: Massapequa, NY (Buh Buh); New York, NY (D-Von)
YEARS PRO: 11 (both)
MAJOR TITLES WON: ECW tag team (8 times), WWE/Raw tag team (8 times), Smackdown tag team, WCW World tag team, WWE hardcore (Buh Buh, 8 times)
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 149 in 1996, 121 in 1997, 74 in 1998, 64 in 1999, 53 in 2000, 30 in 2001, 30 in 2002, 56 in 2003, 37 in 2004 (Buh Buh); 295 in 1996, 177 in 1997, 111 in 1998, 79 in 1999, 60 in 2000, 36 in 2001, 69 in 2003, 43 in 2004 (D-Von)
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Tag Team (2001; 2nd runner up in 2004, in 2003, and in 2000; 3rd runner-up in 1999), Match of the Year (2001, 2000; 2nd runner-up in 2000), Most Hated (3rd runner-up in 1999)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

The "brothers from other mothers" got together in ECW in 1996 … ECW was overflowing with Dudleys when D-Von came in to restore dignity to the family name … Buh Buh and D-Von had a surprisingly intense feud that saw the "brothers" develop mutual respect for each other and form a team … Became the most decorated team in ECW history, winning the ECW tag belts eight times … They may have been the most hated wrestlers ever to set foot in an ECW ring, routinely inciting near-riots with obscenity-filled promos … Beat The New Age Outlaws for the WWF tag belts at No Way Out 2000 … Raised the bar for violence in the WWF, putting woman after woman through tables … Had epic rivalries with Edge and Christian and The Hardy Boyz … Seem to win WWE tag belts at least once a year … Split for the better part of a year when the brand extension sent D-Von to Smackdown, where he became Rev. D-Von, a bogus holy man … Buh Buh excelled in Raw's hardcore division in D-Von's absence … They reunited at the 2002 Survivor Series … Traded to Smackdown in March 2004 and won those tag belts just a few months later … Took some much-needed time off in late-2004 and into 2005 … Lost a stunner to M-N-M in OVW this spring … Expected to return to WWE by June.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Beating The New Age Outlaws for the WWF tag belts. The Dudleys showed they were more than just a great *ECW* team. They were a great team, period. Them beating the Outlaws silenced those who claimed Buh Buh and D-Von were simply a hardcore act.

STRONGEST PART OF THEIR MATCHES:

"D-Von! Get the table!" Putting foe after foe through wooden tables turned the Dudleys into stars. Even if they lose the match, they can still claim a moral victory if they get their hands on the wood.

WEAKEST PART OF THEIR MATCHES:

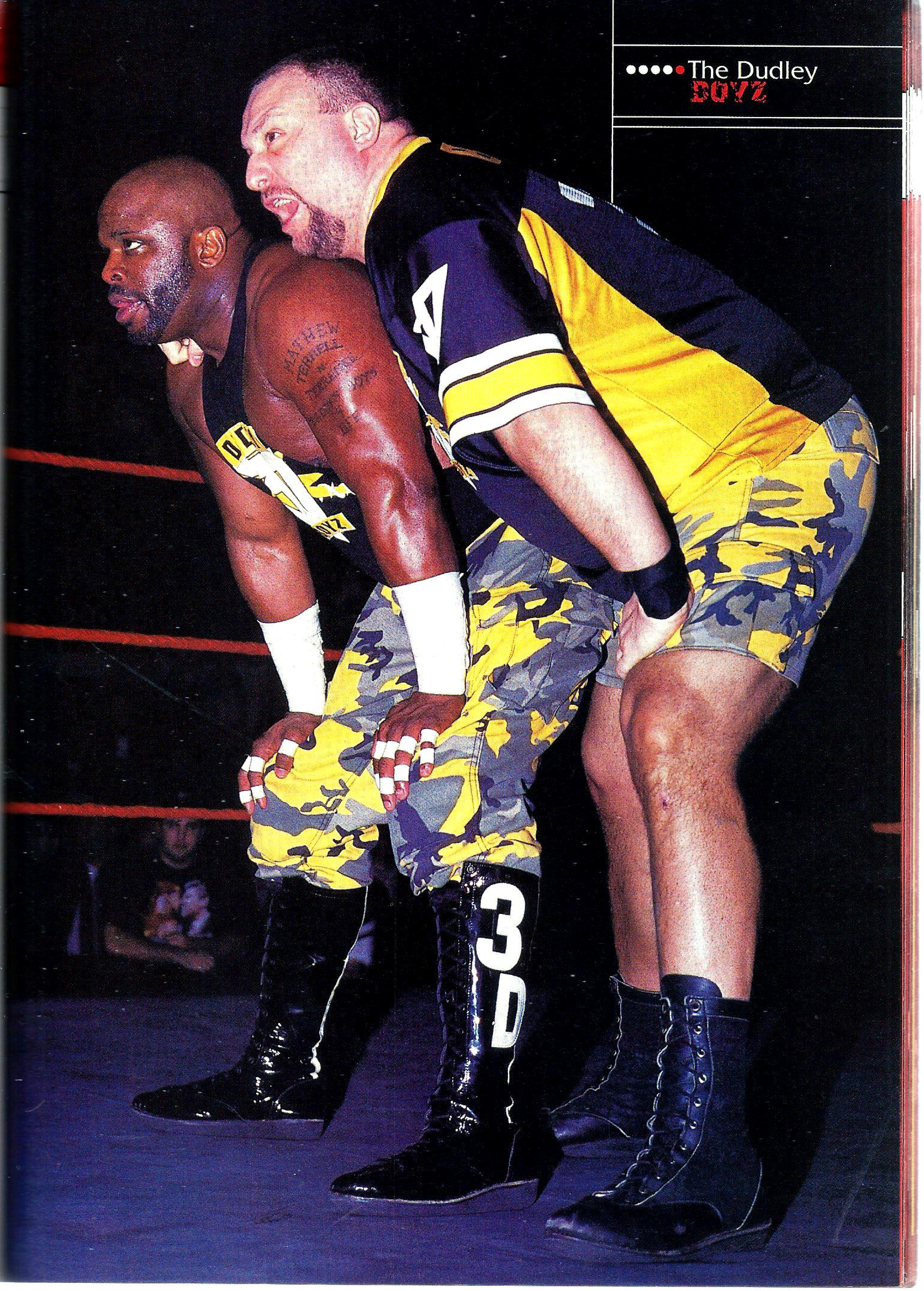
Both Dudleys—particularly Buh Buh—tend to get a tad winded in longer matches. Their stifling choice of ring attire doesn't help matters, either, as they lose a lot of fluids through sweat and risk becoming dehydrated. The longer a match goes, the less likely they are to win.

WHOM THEY WANT TO FACE:

The Dudleys don't discriminate, and they don't have to do so. They are good enough to take on any team at any time. They still hunger for respect, so the better their opponents are, the happier they are.

WHOM THEY OUGHT TO AVOID:

The Dudleys are a classic case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. They need to remember that and stay together. Their individual singles runs were disappointments.



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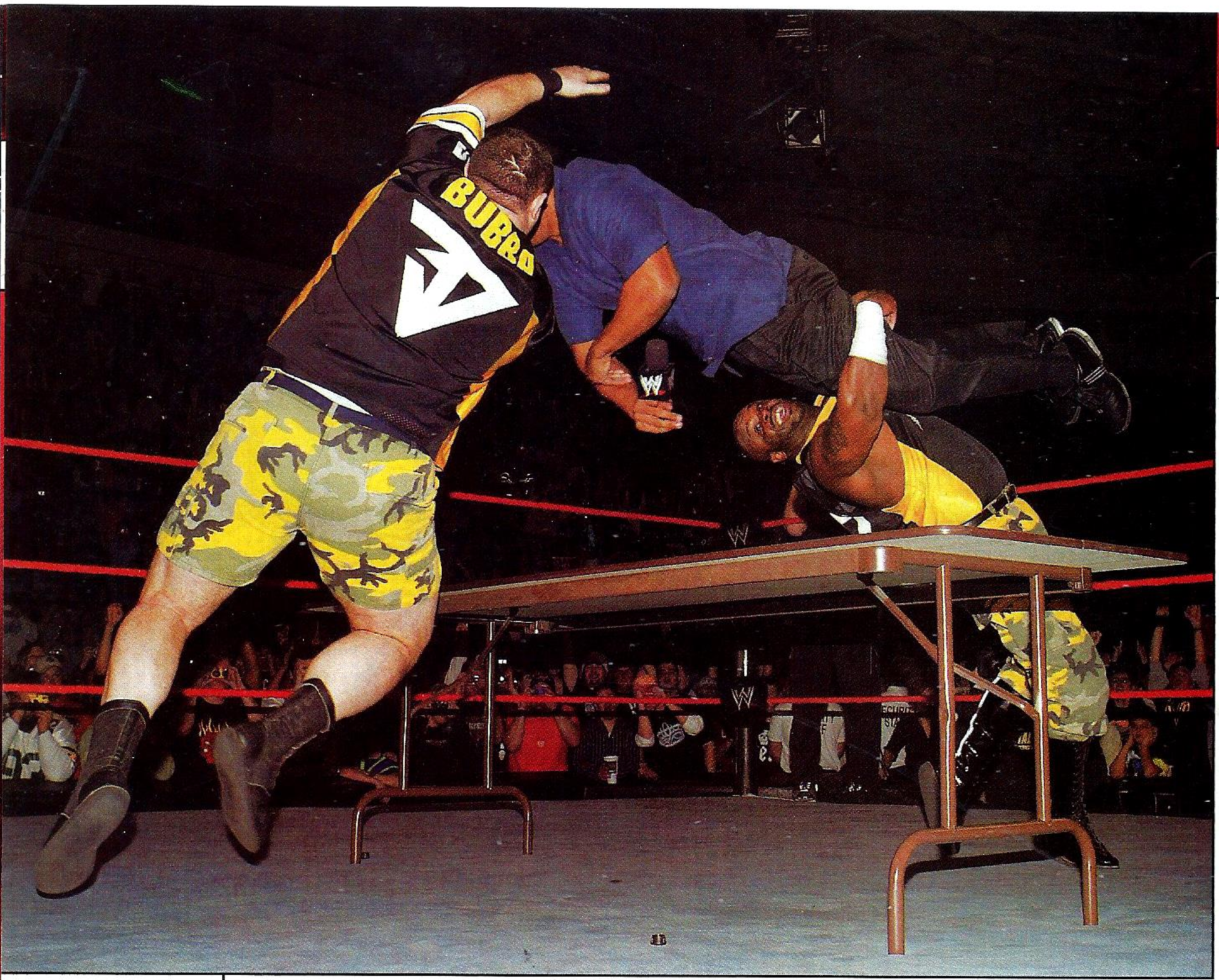

Coach tastes a table, courtesy of the Dudleys

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO THEIR REPERTOIRE:

There's really no need to mess with a successful formula. Still, we'd love to see a reunion with former manager Joel Gertner in WWE.

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SMARTEST MOVE THEY EVER MADE:

Perfecting the art of the insult. Long-time ECW fans will never forget the riot-inducing promos the Dudleys used to routinely cut. They never met an audience they couldn't make hate their guts in less than five minutes. More than anything else, those early promos made the Dudleys stars. It took a while for their wrestling skills to catch up to their mike skills.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE THEY EVER MADE:

The Dudleys' biggest mistake was all D-Von's doing. The Rev. D-Von gimmick was a train wreck. But you have to give D-Von credit for having an eye for talent. That Deacon Batista guy he hired turned out pretty well, didn't he?

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WE SAID IT:

"It seems like a lifetime ago when the Dudley clan was the comic relief of ECW. Now Buh Buh and D-Von can stake a claim to being the most successful tag team of the past decade. What a transformation."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"I always took a certain pride in seeing the Dudleys excel in WWE. A lot of people said they would flop outside ECW, like Public Enemy before them. Instead, they got even better, and that reflected well on them, ECW, and everyone who got on board the ECW bandwagon at the start."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"The Dudleys deserve to be called one of the best teams of all-time, but they're going to need to do something to freshen up their act and maybe jump-start the WWE tag team division in the process."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

Charlie HAAS

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'2"

WEIGHT: 235

HOMETOWN: Edmond, OK

YEARS PRO: 9

MAJOR TITLES WON: Jersey All Pro Wrestling tag team (2 times), East Coast Wrestling Association tag team, Combat Zone Wrestling tag team, Memphis Championship Wrestling tag team (2 times), Heartland Wrestling Association heavyweight, Smackdown tag team (3 times)

***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 341 in 2000, 121 in 2001, 134 in 2002, 25 in 2003, 40 in 2004

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Tag Team (with Shelton Benjamin, 2003; 3rd runner-up, with Rico, in 2004), Inspirational (2nd runner-up in 2002), Most Improved (with Shelton Benjamin, 2nd runner-up, in 2003)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Charlie Haas and his brother, Russ, were both standout collegiate wrestlers at Seton Hall University in New Jersey before turning pro ... Their mix of athleticism and scientific skills won them tag titles in numerous smaller independent promotions ... Signed WWE developmental deals in August 2000 and were assigned to Memphis Championship Wrestling, and then later moved on to the Heartland Wrestling Association ... Russ died of heart failure on December 14, 2001 ... Charlie briefly adopted the ring name R.C. Haas (incorporating Russ' first initial) as a tribute ... Won the HWA heavyweight title in January 2002 ... Debuted with Smackdown as part of Team Angle along with fellow former collegiate star Shelton Benjamin ... Beat Eddie and Chavo Guerrero Jr. for the Smackdown tag team championship on February 4, 2003 ... Lost and regained the belts from Eddie Guerrero and Tajiri later in the year ... Split with Angle, then Benjamin was sent to Raw, leaving Haas alone ... Formed an odd but entertaining team with Rico, and they struck Smackdown gold together ... Got caught in a love triangle with Dawn Marie and Miss Jackie, then publicly dissed both (but remained engaged to marry Jackie in real life) ... Now teams with Hardcore Holly.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

It wasn't something that happened in front of the TV cameras or something Haas did to advance his career. When his brother, Russ, died in 2001, Charlie dedicated his own career to his brother's memory. To this day, he pays tribute

Haas targets the arm of Rey Misterio Jr.

Charlie HAAS

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to his brother by writing Russ' name on his wrist tape whenever he steps into the ring. It keeps him motivated and grounded at the same time.

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STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

A former collegiate wrestler at Seton Hall, Haas has better cardiovascular conditioning than almost anyone else in pro wrestling. If WWE had some sort of "Ironman" title, Haas would be a favorite to win it. The longer his matches go, the more comfortable he is.

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WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Haas is a slow starter. He often gets into trouble in the first couple of minutes, particularly when he allows himself to get lured into playing a power game against bigger opponents.

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WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Expert martial artists are told not to spar against anyone other than trained martial artists. The reason is that inexperienced fighters act in unpredictable ways and could hurt both their opponents and themselves with foolhardy tactics. The same can be true in wrestling. Haas is a consummate wrestler, and he should face consummate wrestlers such as Kurt Angle, Paul London, and Eddie Guerrero ...

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WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

... and he should avoid big, bruising brawlers like Matt Morgan and Heidenreich. Until he gets more experience facing men much bigger than he is, he should play to his strengths and leave the brawlers alone.

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Mike skills. Haas needs to start talking more. We still don't understand why a man who had Miss Jackie and Dawn Marie fighting for him would leave them both behind. Haas needs to tell us more about who he is and what he wants to accomplish in WWE. He isn't standing out now.

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Aligning himself with Angle and forming The World's Greatest Tag Team with Shelton Benjamin upon joining the Smackdown roster. He got an opportunity to learn from one of the best, and he's putting what he learned to good use today.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Allowing himself to become a bit player in a silly feud between Jackie Gayda and Dawn Marie. Luckily, he rectified things by distancing himself from both (at least publicly). He was planning to marry Jackie in real life in June.

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WE SAID IT:

"I've been fortunate enough to watch Charlie Haas develop for a number of years now. A lot of people don't realize that he's a top-notch technical wrestler and would be a perfect U.S. or Intercontinental champion if he got the chance."

—Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz

"All this kid wanted to do was team with his brother, Russ, in WWE. Fate dealt him a tragedy, but he's recovered strongly, and he's one of my personal favorite Smackdown competitors. I'm pulling for him to accomplish a lot."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"It's time for Haas to reinvent himself and get a fresh start. The team with Rico was good for a few laughs, but he's been in a holding pattern ever since. A move to Raw would be perfect for him. Look what it did for Shelton Benjamin."

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

Chavo GUERRERO Jr.

VITAL STATISTICS:

HEIGHT: 5'7"
WEIGHT: 210
HOMETOWN: El Paso, TX
YEARS PRO: 11
MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW/WWE cruiserweight (5 times), Smackdown tag team (2), WCW World tag team
***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 139 in 1997, 64 in 1998, 105 in 1999, 98 in 2000, 42 in 2001, 115 in 2002, 33 in 2003, 17 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Tag Team (3rd runner-up, with Eddie Guerrero, 2003)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Part of one of wrestling's great families, Chavo made his pro debut in May 1994 after training with his father, Chavo Sr., and uncles Eddie, Hector, and Mando ... Toured the Far East with New Japan in 1996 ... Signed with WCW later that year ... Pinned Uncle Eddie at the 1998 Great American Bash in the first phase of their on-again/off-again feud ... Was briefly "managed" by a wooden hobby horse he named Pepe, then joined The Misfits in Action as Lt. Loco ... Won his first cruiserweight title by beating Daffney and Disco Inferno (really) in a three-way match on June 6, 2000 ... Joined WWE in March 2001 after WCW was sold ... Teamed with Eddie to win the Smackdown tag title from Edge and Rey Misterio Jr. at the 2002 Survivor Series in a match that also involved Kurt Angle and Chris Benoit ... Lost the belts to Shelton Benjamin and Charlie Haas ... Regained the belts in September 2003, but dissension split the team ... Came out on the losing end of a violent feud against Eddie ... Beat Misterio for the cruiserweight title at No Way Out 2004 ... Defended the cruiserweight title at the cruiserweight open bout at WrestleMania XX a month later ... Briefly took on father Chavo Sr. (a.k.a. Chavo Classic) as his manager ... Suffered a concussion as the result of a botched shooting star press from Billy Kidman ... Came back and won his fifth cruiserweight title at No Way Out 2005, but lost it to Paul London in an eight-man battle royal five nights before WrestleMania 21 ... Now back to stirring up trouble with Uncle Eddie.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Unfortunately for Chavito, his defining moment was one of the worst moments of his professional career. It was a bloody, brutal family feud between Chavo and his uncle Eddie Guerrero. For Chavo, it was a chance to escape from his uncle's shadow. Instead, he was quickly—and decisively—humbled at the 2004 Royal Rumble. He has yet to recover completely.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Chavo is strongest when he's breaking the rules. When he's lying, cheating, and stealing like his more famous uncle, he can use those foul tactics to take an early advantage. Often, that's the only opening he needs.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Chavo is not the best transition wrestler. In other words, once he gets into trouble, he has a hard time recovering and going back on the offensive. He usually has to hope for his opponent to make a mistake to take over again.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

This Guerrero has been a cruiserweight force for more than seven years now, but he rarely gets the respect he deserves. It's about time for him to set his sights on the U.S. title.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Eddie. Either as a partner or an ally, Eddie can only hold Chavo back. Unless he sets

•••••Chavo
GUERRERO Jr.

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Chavo Jr. goes for the throat of Rey Misterio Jr.

out on his own, he'll always be known primarily as Eddie's nephew.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

He is missing some intangible element that is keeping him from fulfilling his potential. Maybe he needs a manager. Maybe he should come up with a catchphrase, or call his brainbuster the Chavo crusher. All we know is he has to make a change or two somewhere.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Bringing Chavo Classic on as his manager. Chavo Classic's WWE career may have been short-lived, but Chavo Jr. was never more entertaining than he was when he had his father at his side.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Coming up small against Eddie at the 2004 Royal Rumble. Considering how important a match it was for him, Chavo should have had a backup plan. He had no qualms about lying, cheating, and stealing, but even that couldn't help him win.

WE SAID IT:

"It's easy to take Chavo for granted. He has these spurts of energy when he's in the thick of contention, and then he's almost invisible for months at a time. He's hard to get a handle on."

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

"Chavo has accomplished all he can as a cruiserweight. It's time for him to test himself against the heavyweights. However the draft lottery pans out, he should try to make sure he's not with the same brand as Eddie."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"I'd like to see Chavo let loose with some of those Lucha Libre skills of his. He's been much too conservative of late. He should put it all out there and go for some gold."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

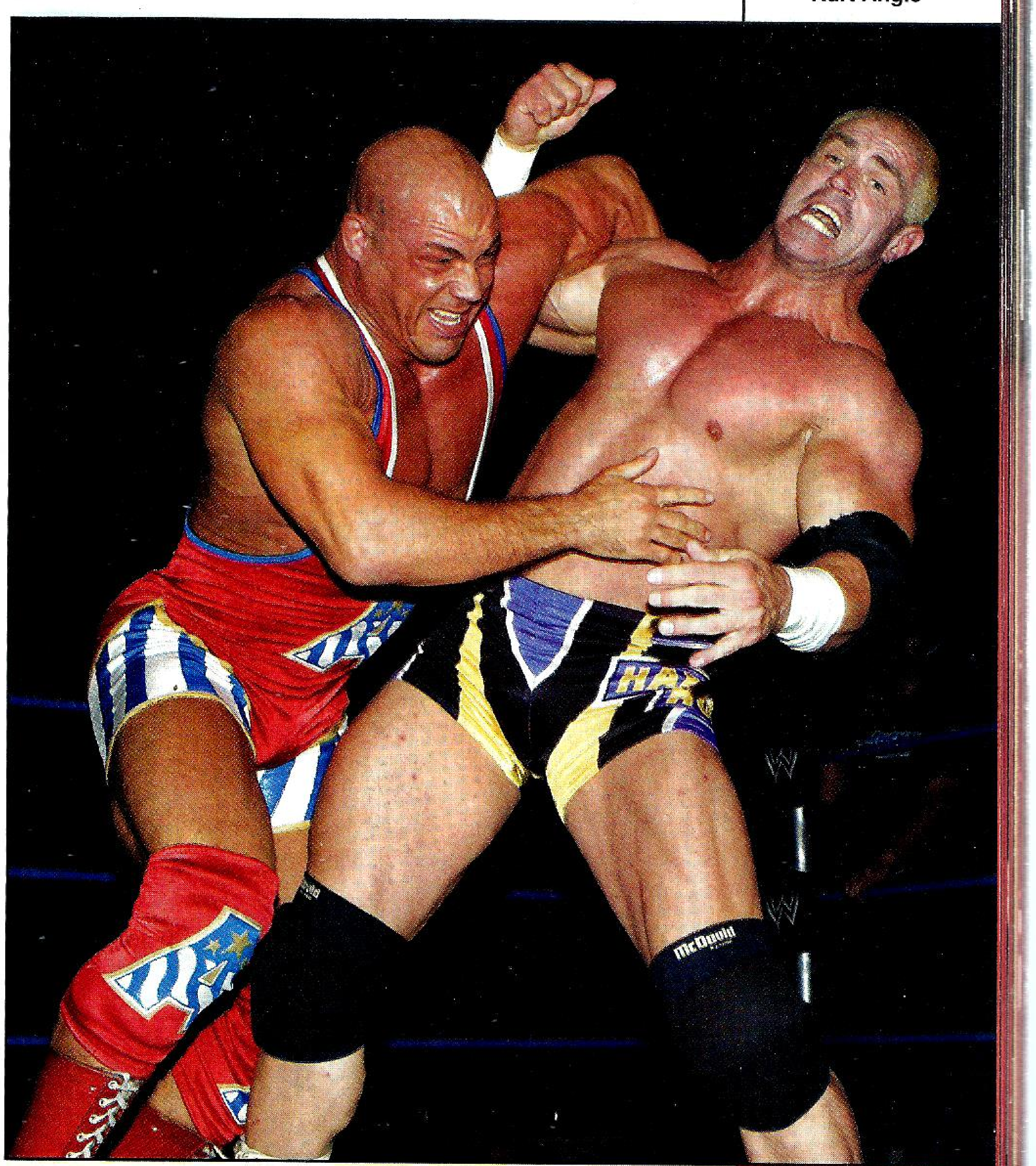
Hardcore HOLLY

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 249
HOMETOWN: Mobile, AL
YEARS PRO: 12
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWF World tag team (2 times), WWF hardcore (5 times), NWA tag team
***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 189 in 1994, 135 in 1996, 134 in 1997, 164 in 1998, 68 in 1999, 41 in 2000, 51 in 2001, 99 in 2002, 54 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Most Improved (2nd runner-up in 1999)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

WWE's resident bully looked much different when he entered the WWF as Sparky Plugg … Actually was touted as a talented aerial wrestler back then and compared to a young Bobby Eaton … Teamed with Robert Gibson briefly and competed in Smoky Mountain Wrestling before joining the WWF … His love for auto racing earned him a race car driver gimmick, which was only natural, as he raced stock cars in his spare time … Pulled off a major upset in 1995, teaming with The 1-2-3 Kid (Sean Waltman) to win the vacant WWF World tag title by beating Bam Bam Bigelow and Tatanka in a tournament final … Seemingly beat Jeff Jarrett for the Intercontinental title in 1995, but the championship was held up for a rematch that Jarrett won … Teamed with Bart Gunn as The New Midnight Express in 1998 … The Express briefly held the NWA tag title (which was defended on WWF cards) … Joined Al Snow's J.O.B. Squad … In frustration, broke out on his own as a hardcore wrestler, adopting the name Hardcore Holly rather than just Bob Holly … Beat Snow and Billy Gunn in a hardcore triangle match at WrestleMania XV … Began teaming with "cousin" Crash in 1999 … Won a hardcore battle royal at WrestleMania 2000 … Suffered a broken arm on a botched moonsault in a June 2000 match against Kurt Angle … Suffered a ruptured disk in his neck during a September 2002 match against Brock Lesnar and missed nearly a year of action … Was a feared trainer on *Tough Enough III* and brutalized contender (and eventual *TE* co-winner) Matt



Holly goes for a hiptoss against Kurt Angle

Hardcore HOLLY

McDavid
McDavid

Cappotelli ... Lost to Lesnar in a featured bout at the 2004 Royal Rumble ... Currently teaming with Charlie Haas.

●●●●●

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

It's hard to think of Holly without thinking of the way he attacked trusting student Matt Cappotelli during *Tough Enough III.* None of his in-ring exploits is nearly as memorable as the night he beat up a kid who was afraid to fight back. Not his proudest moment.

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STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Holly is the kind of guy who brags, "When you fight me, you feel like you survived a war." He takes pride in inflicting pain and bruising opponents just because he can. He is at his best—or worst—in the opening moments, particularly when he's in a bad mood. Which he usually is.

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WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Like all bullies, Holly falls apart when he meets another wrestler as big and strong as he is. If an opponent can weather his initial storm, Hardcore is most likely going to crumble.

●●●●●

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

The only time Holly ever seemed particularly interested in a world title was when he was going after Lesnar's gold, and that was mostly to get revenge on big Brock for injuring his neck. Holly wants to be WWE's top spoiler, the guy who chases away the pretenders and gives newcomers a stiff welcome to WWE. He wants to face any new guys with stars in their eyes so he can roll out his own welcoming party.

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WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

The Undertaker. By most accounts, Undertaker is Smackdown's toughest guy. He's the WWE enforcer, a locker room leader who can either help or hinder a youngster's career. Holly is the guy who constantly demands respect, while 'Taker quietly goes out and earns it.

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

The full-nelson. Holly used this old-fashioned submission hold very effectively against Lesnar, but he has all but abandoned it in recent months. Considering that it nearly won him the Smackdown title, maybe he should dust it off again.

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Going hardcore. If not for the Hardcore Holly persona, he probably would have been given his pink slip years ago.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Trying to be the next Midnight Express. Sorry, Bob. We knew "Beautiful" Bobby and "Sweet" Stan, and you, sir, are no "Beautiful" Bobby or "Sweet" Stan.

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WE SAID IT:

"Holly is a throwback to the old days when tough men ruled the sport. I have to admit, I smile to myself when he catches hold of one of those flipping young hot dogs and Alabama slams the tar out of him."

—*Contributing Writer Matt Brock*

"I can see why a lot of people think he's a foul human being, but he's a formidable all-around wrestler."

—*Contributing Writer Liz Hunter*

"I'm starting to like this team of Holly and Haas. They're not flashy, but they combine power and finesse in the same way The Hart Foundation did back in 1986."

—*Senior Writer Frank Krewda*

Kurt
ANGLE

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 233
HOMETOWN: Pittsburgh, PA
YEARS PRO: 6
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE World (2 times) WWE Smackdown (2 times), WCW World, WWE European, WWE Intercontinental, WWE hardcore, WCW U.S., Smackdown tag team, Power Pro Wrestling heavyweight
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 13 in 2000, 1 in 2001, 6 in 2002, 3 in 2003, 36 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Wrestler (2003, 1st runner-up in 2001, 3rd runner-up in 2000), Tag Team (3rd runner-up, with Chris Benoit, in 2002), Match (2003, 3rd runner-up in 2002 and in 2004), Feud (2003, 2000, 1st runner-up in 2002, 2nd runner-up in 2001), Most Popular (2003, 3rd runner-up in 2001), Most Hated (2000, 2nd runner-up in 2001, 2002, and in 2004), Most Improved (3rd runner-up in 2001), Comeback (2003), Inspirational (2001, 1st runner-up in 2003), Rookie (2000)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Kurt Angle is not only the only Olympic gold medallist in WWE history, but he is also one of the most talented all-around competitors ever to compete in the pro ranks ... Won two NCAA championships at Clarion University ... Won the Olympic freestyle gold medal at 220 pounds in 1996 ... Signed with the WWF in October 1998 ... In his first year with the Federation, he won the European and Intercontinental titles and triumphed in the King of the Ring Tournament ... Beat The Rock for the World title on October 22, 2000 ... Has won a total of five world titles and owns wins over Triple-H, Steve Austin, The Rock, Hulk Hogan, The Big Show, and The Undertaker, among others ... Inducted into the *Wrestling Observer* Hall of Fame after just five years in pro wrestling ... Also a member of the National Amateur Wrestling Hall of Fame ... Suffered a career-threatening neck injury but still competed in the main event of WrestleMania 19, losing to Brock Lesnar ... Underwent experimental surgery in 2003 and amazingly returned to the ring just two months later ... Has had neck problems on and off since ... Beat Shawn Michaels in a Match of the Year candidate at WrestleMania 21 ... No one has ever accomplished so much is such a short period of time ... Considered by many to be wrestling's best all-around performer ever.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

In his mind, it was when he overcame a broken neck to win a gold medal in the 1996 Olympics. While we can't argue with that, as far as his defining *pro* wrestling moment, we'd have to go with his epic 'Mania bout against Lesnar. Angle was wrestling injured and putting his career (and perhaps his life) on the line, but he wanted to give Lesnar—and the fans—the match they deserved. He delivered with 2003's Match of the Year.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Angle does not run out of gas. His amateur background has given him vast reserves of stamina. He can wrestle a fast-paced match (as he does with his hometown challenges on *Smackdown)* or slow it down. He's equally dangerous both ways.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

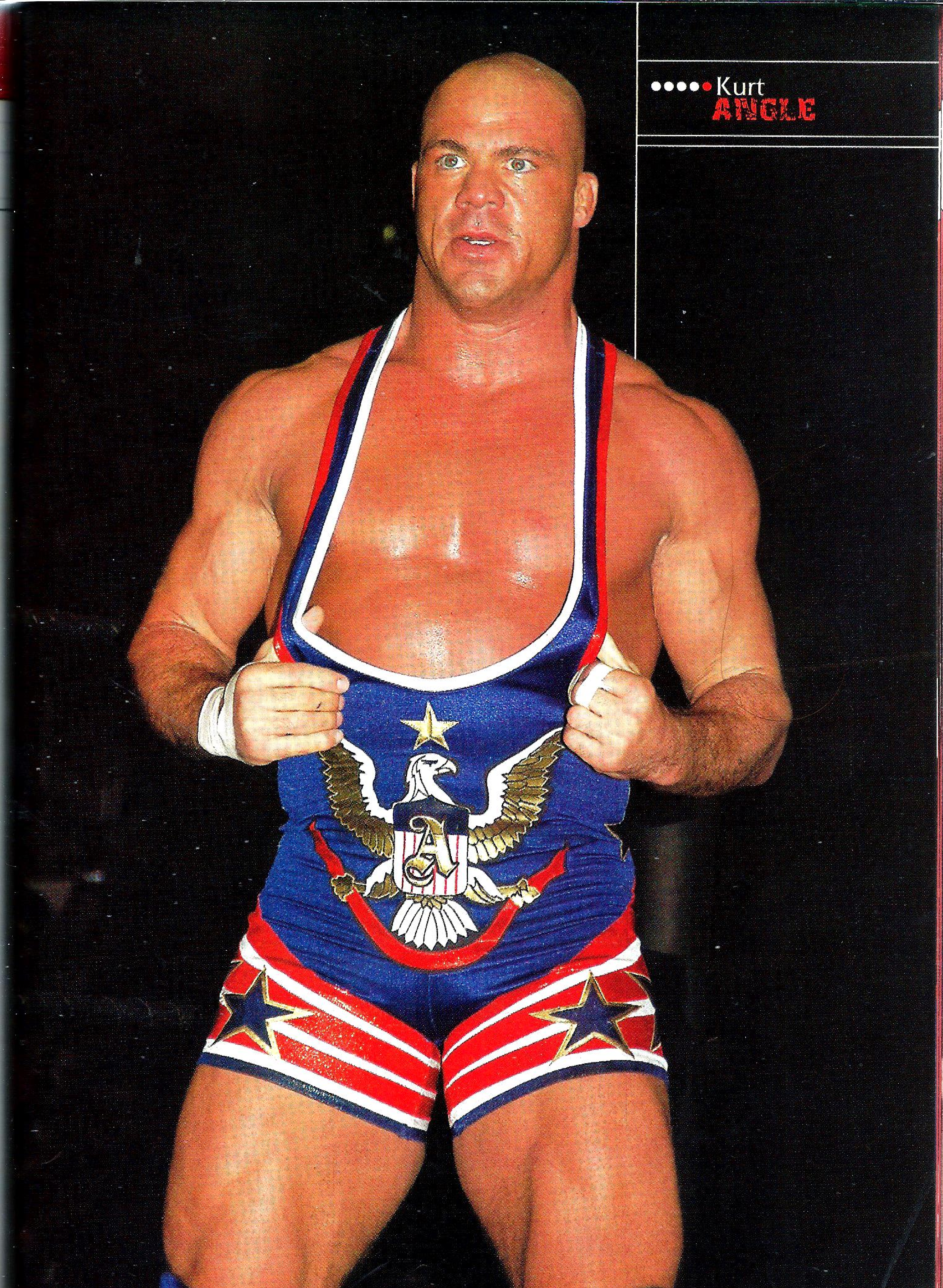
Tends to fixate on the anklelock. It's a very effective hold that has brought him plenty of success, but he should *always* remember he has other holds and finishers in his arsenal. A pinfall is just as good as a submission.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Bret Hart. Angle's ultimate dream match is

●●●●● Kurt

ANGLE



Kurt Angle might get another Match of the Year this year

an impossibility, but it's what he wants more than anything else. Who is the "best there is, best there was, and best there ever will be"?

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WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Randy Orton. "The Legend Killer" struggled a bit after turning fan favorite last summer and will need a big win to boost himself when he returns from his shoulder injury. Angle had best beware and not allow himself to be the latest victim of Orton's RKO.

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

We're not going to nitpick *The Mona Lisa* here. Angle has everything he needs, but maybe a bit too much confidence at times.

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

For the longest time, Angle thought pro wrestling was beneath him. He thought Olympians should never dirty their hands in the squared circle. Fortunately, he overcame his biases. He has certainly earned plenty of money in WWE and delivered some of the greatest matches of this era.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Underestimating John Cena. Cena has handed Angle some of his most embarrassing losses. For some reason, Angle doesn't get "up" for his matches against Cena the way he does against other superstars. Now that Cena is Smackdown champ, that should no longer be a problem.

●●●●●

WE SAID IT:

"As far as I am concerned, Angle is the greatest of all-time. Fans should cherish every time they see this guy in action, because it's like seeing Gretzky, Jordan, or Payton in their prime. There will never be another like Angle."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"A true phenomenon, in every sense. This man was born and raised to wrestle, and he does it better than anybody."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Angle has all the skill in the world, but he has never been world champion for a prolonged period. He has always been something of a transitional champion. His ego and willingness to rely on shortcuts might tarnish his legacy just a little."

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

Paul LONDON

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'10"
WEIGHT: 205
HOMETOWN: Austin, TX
YEARS PRO: 6
MAJOR TITLES WON: Smackdown tag team, WWE cruiserweight
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 45 in 2003, 82 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

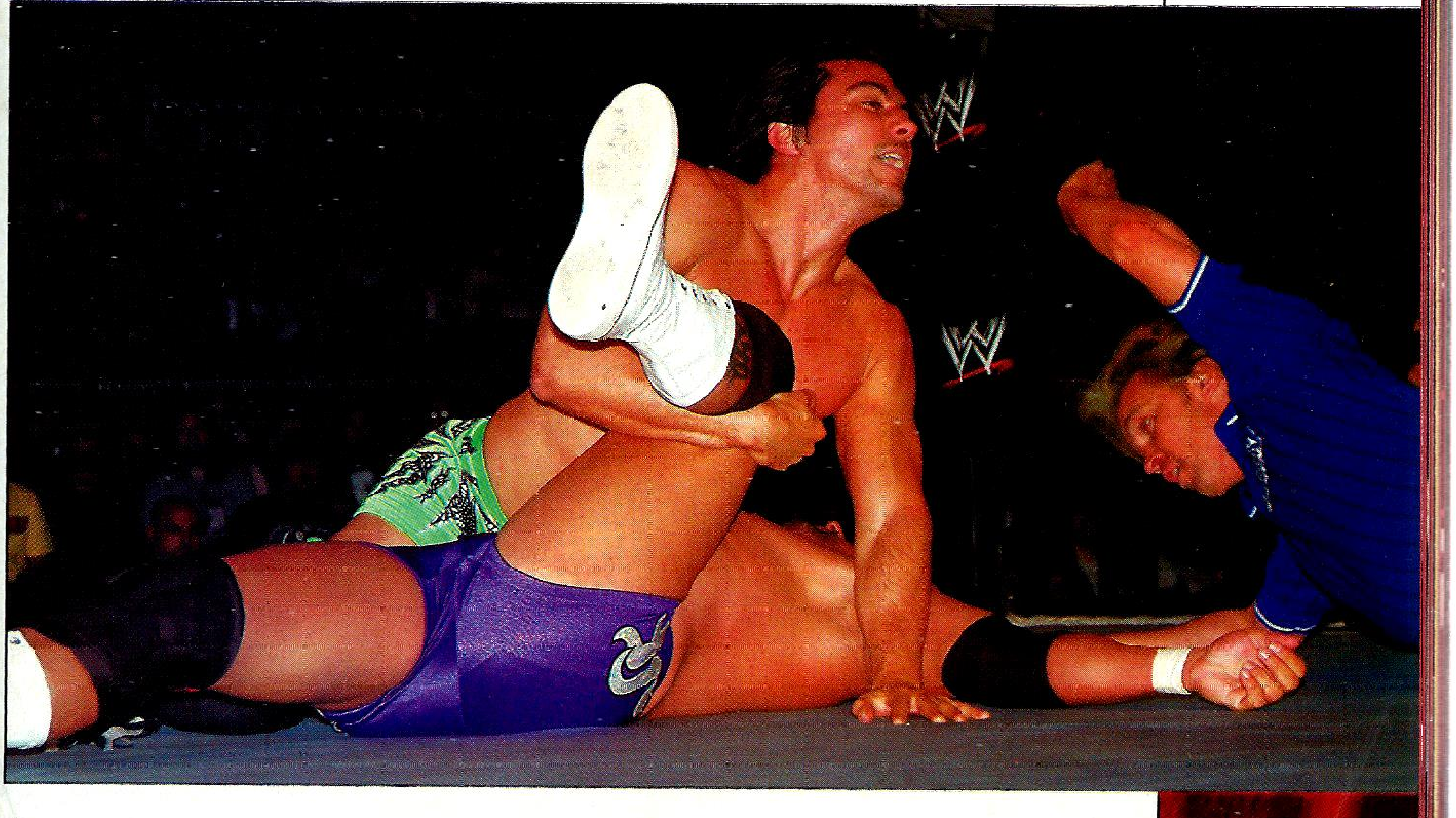
CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Graduate of the Shawn Michaels Wrestling Academy debuted in 1999 … Gained a fan following in Ring of Honor … Lost to Spanky in the first round of the ROH title tournament in June 2002 … Beat former training partners American Dragon and Michael Shane, but could not win Xavier's ROH championship … Willingness to take huge risks and absorb incredible amounts of punishment spurred fans to chant "Please don't die!" during some of his matches … Won the 2003 ECWA Super 8 Tournament … Beat C.M. Punk, Jason Cross, and Kid Romeo to earn an X division title match in TNA, but lost to Chris Sabin at TNA's 2003 anniversary card … Lost to Samoa Joe in a brutal July 2003 bout that was his last for ROH before joining WWE … Utterly destroyed by Brock Lesnar in a "tryout match" signed by Vince McMahon … Teamed with Spanky for Smackdown before Spanky left WWE … Formed a team with Billy Kidman, and they won the Smackdown tag belts together … Once-promising team disintegrated over Kidman's reluctance to use his shooting star press, and they lost the belts … Lost to Kidman at No Mercy, suffering a broken nose in the process … Avenged his loss to Kidman with several wins upon his return from injury … Won the cruiserweight title in a battle royal on March 31, 2005.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

April 12, 2003. That was the day London defeated American Dragon in what is still called one of the greatest matches in ROH history.

Paul London has finally gotten the best of Kidman



●●●●● Paul **LONDON**

Coming exactly one week after his Super 8 victory, it firmly established London as one of wrestling's up-and-coming sensations and certainly caught the eye of WWE talent scouts.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Unfortunately, London hasn't had too many opportunities to truly shine in WWE, as he has been too frequently stuck in tag matches, battle royals, and cruiserweight opens. London excels in the later minutes of a match, and truly performs after the 15-minute mark. Unfortunately, his most high-profile WWE bouts have been much shorter, giving him little time to hit his stride.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

London needs a lesson in bobbing and weaving. He gets his clock cleaned by jackhammer punches and clotheslines that seem to turn him inside-out. (Anyone remember his insane fall at the 2005 Royal Rumble?) London needs to protect himself better before he suffers a serious injury.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Rey Misterio Jr. Give them 30 minutes and let them put it all out there. London vs. Misterio could rank up there with Liger vs. Pillman and Ultimo Dragon vs. Dean Malenko as one of the great cruiserweight rivalries of our time.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Anyone weighing more than 260 pounds. London is still in a critical period. If he continues to excel against the cruiserweights, he could eventually graduate to Intercontinental/U.S. and even world title contention, just as Chris Jericho, Eddie Guerrero, and Chris Benoit did before him. But more of those crushing losses—like the disaster against Lesnar—could ruin his credibility for good.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Microphone skills. London needs to talk more. Is there more to him as a person than his Keanu-esque looks and fringed boots? Yes, but we need to find out what.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Having the guts to face dangerous wrestlers like Homicide, Samoa Joe, and Lesnar. Yes, he took brutal beatings, but the respect he earned in the process is immeasurable.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Calling out Kidman in public after Kidman walked out on him. Sure, London was angry. But that should have been a private matter discussed backstage. By slapping Kidman and then doing nothing as Kidman walked away, he made an enemy who wanted nothing more than to humiliate him.

WE SAID IT:

"London has plenty of skills, but he seems just a little out there personality-wise at times, though not in a bad way at all. Maybe that could work for him if WWE gave it a chance. He's a little different, but different can be good in wrestling."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"London is a darling of the tape-trading community, and for good reason. His float-over dropkick is a thing of beauty, and he's a good-looking kid. But WWE is a different world from the independent circuit. I'm not entirely convinced he won't pull a Spanky and leave when things don't go his way."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter.

"He has the potential to be a terrific Intercontinental or U.S. champion if he adds a little more mass. Worlds of potential."

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

Eddie GUERRERO

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'8"
WEIGHT: 223
HOMETOWN: El Paso, TX
YEARS PRO: 17
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Smackdown, WWE Intercontinental (2 times), WWE Smackdown tag team (4 times), WWE European (2 times), WCW cruiserweight (2 times), ECW TV (2 times), WCW/WWE U.S. (2 times), WWA (Mexico) trios tag team, WWA welterweight, AAA tag team, PWF tag team, World Wrestling All-Stars international cruiserweight, IWA Mid-South heavyweight
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 141 in 1994, 17 in 1995, 29 in 1996, 24 in 1997, 28 in 1998, 20 in 2000, 50 in 2001, 5 in 2002, 9 in 2003, 2 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Inspirational (2004), Wrestler (2nd runner-up in 2004), Match (3rd runner-up in 2004, 2nd runner-up in 2002, 1st runner-up in 1997), Most Popular (2nd runner-up in 2004), Tag Team (3rd runner-up, with Chavo Guerrero Jr., in 2003), Comeback (1999, 1st runner-up in 2002), Inspirational (2002)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Like a thoroughbred horse, Eddie Guerrero was training almost as soon as he was walking … Part of a wrestling family that included father Gory and older brothers Hector, Mando, and Chavo Sr. … Debuted in 1987 and competed with his brothers in Mexico … Formed an infamous heel team with Art Barr known as Los Gringos Locos … Competed for New Japan as Black Tiger in 1994 … Joined ECW soon thereafter … Showcased the skills he picked up in Mexico and Japan in classic bouts against Dean Malenko and 2 Cold Scorpio … Those matches helped change the face of wrestling in the U.S. … Joined WCW in 1995 … Guerrero helped usher in a cruiserweight renaissance in WCW … Grew frustrated with what he perceived to be a "glass ceiling" in the company … Requested and received his release from WCW in January 2000 and debuted in the WWF a few days later, accompanied by fellow Radicals Malenko, Chris Benoit, and Perry Saturn … That defection helped swing the power in the Monday night wars in the WWF's favor for good … Won the European title and held the Intercontinental title on two occasions … Achieved his lifelong dream of winning a world championship at No Way Out 2004, upsetting Brock Lesnar for the Smackdown title … Fell victim to the pressures of being champ and dropped the title to JBL four months later … Lost several key matches to Rey Misterio Jr. late in 2004 and then started teaming with him, winning the Smackdown tag belts … Ultimately, Guerrero cracked again, violently turning against Misterio, making him one of Smackdown's most hated wrestlers.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

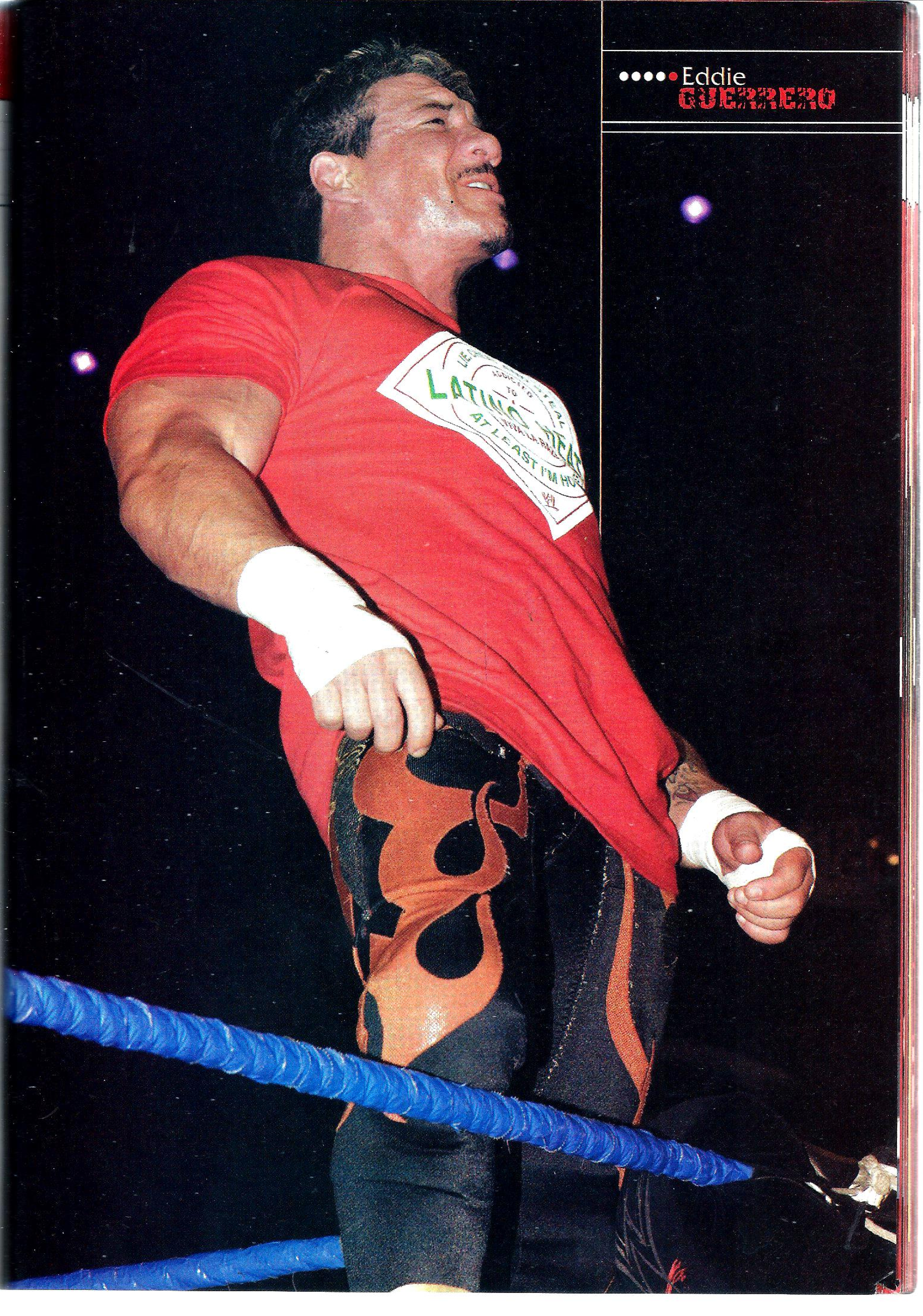
While beating Lesnar for the Smackdown title was huge, we'd go with his win over Kurt Angle at WrestleMania XX. Guerrero beat one of the all-time greats, proving his win over Lesnar was no fluke. He also used his lying, cheating, and stealing skills to outsmart Angle, slipping out of his boot to avoid the anklelock and surprising Angle with a small package. Eddie's finest moment.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

For the past few years, Eddie has had fun clowning around, dancing, and playing to fans. Since betraying Misterio, he has been more aggressive than ever, attacking foes in a rage of blind fury. While he has the stamina to wrestle long matches, he also has that inner rage—and deceptive power—to kick butt and take names. He's dangerous from the moment he gets into the ring until he leaves the arena.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Guerrero has his inner demons. He acutely feels pressure. An opponent who is ready to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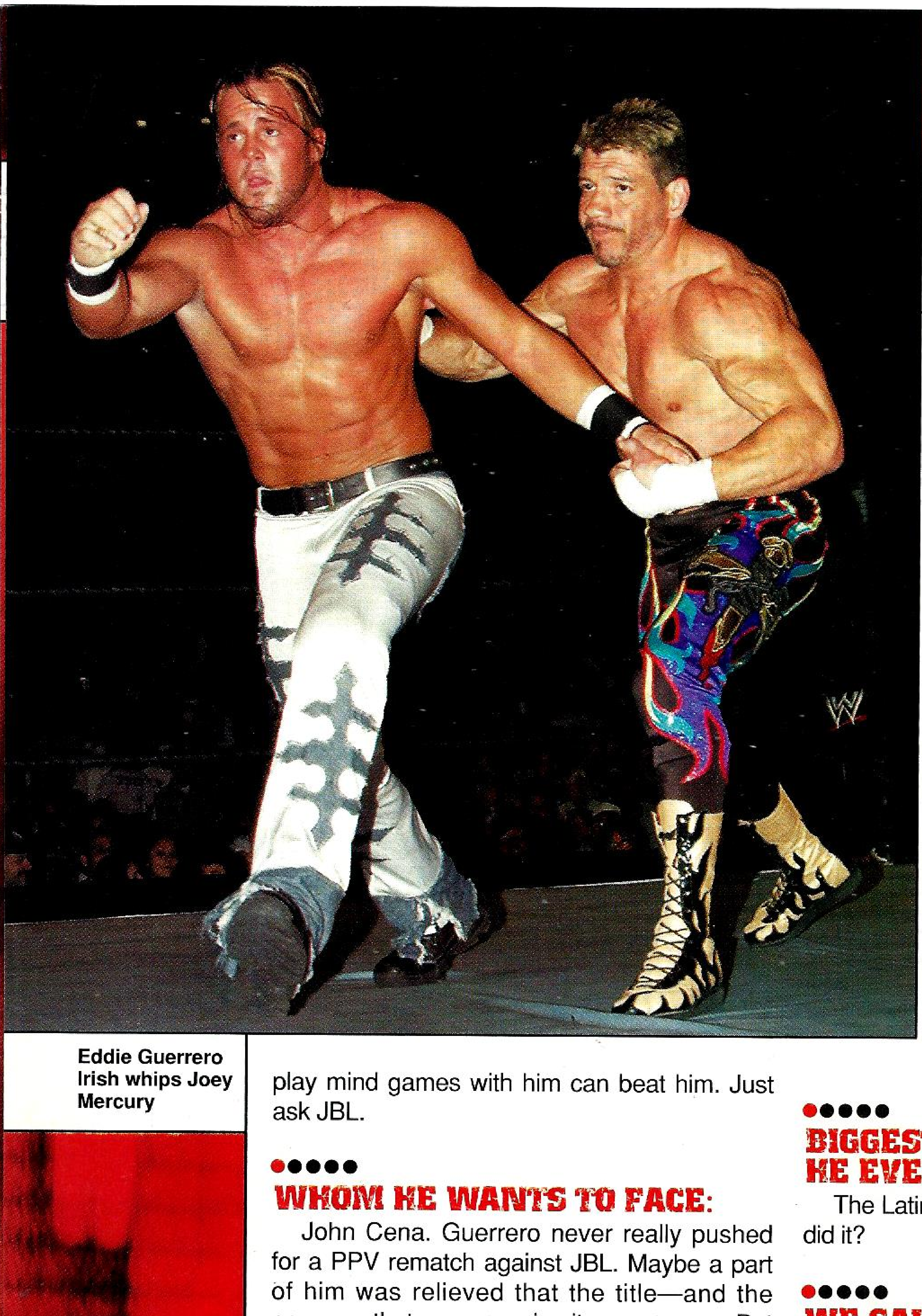


Eddie Guerrero Irish whips Joey Mercury

play mind games with him can beat him. Just ask JBL.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

John Cena. Guerrero never really pushed for a PPV rematch against JBL. Maybe a part of him was relieved that the title—and the pressure that accompanies it—were gone. But now a year has passed and Eddie is tired of being a mid-card player. He is hungry again and wants a chance at redemption. To do that, he must beat Cena.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Luchadores. Eddie is too good of a wrestler to risk being lumped in with all of them. Eddie is a past and perhaps future world champion. Between Misterio, Chavo Jr., and the recently signed Super Crazy, Psicosis, and Juventud Guerrera, Eddie has to avoid getting drawn into battles built solely on the fact that they will have great cruiserweight-style matches. He has to keep his eyes on the biggest prize.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

A kneedrop off the top rope. When Eddie climbs to the top, opponents know a frog splash is coming. A kneedrop is a little less flashy, but can do an incredible amount of damage. And it would keep his enemies guessing. If they roll the wrong way, they might suffer even more damage.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Leaving WCW for WWE. In retrospect, it seems like a no-brainer, but it was a risky move at the time. Ironically, it was in WWE—a company known to cater to super heavyweights—that Guerrero got his chance to shine at the highest level.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

The Latino World Order didn't quite work out, did it?

WE SAID IT:

"I don't condone his actions against Rey Misterio Jr., but I have to admit it's nice to see him showing the old 'Latino Heat' again. I hope he can channel this anger into another world title run."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"Eddie is one of the most versatile and valuable wrestlers on the WWE roster. He will be a world champion again. I guarantee it."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"A real credit to the Guerrero family name, and I watched his daddy in the ring. Eddie is a tremendous wrestler, but he has a very short fuse and has trouble controlling his emotions. That will always be his downfall."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

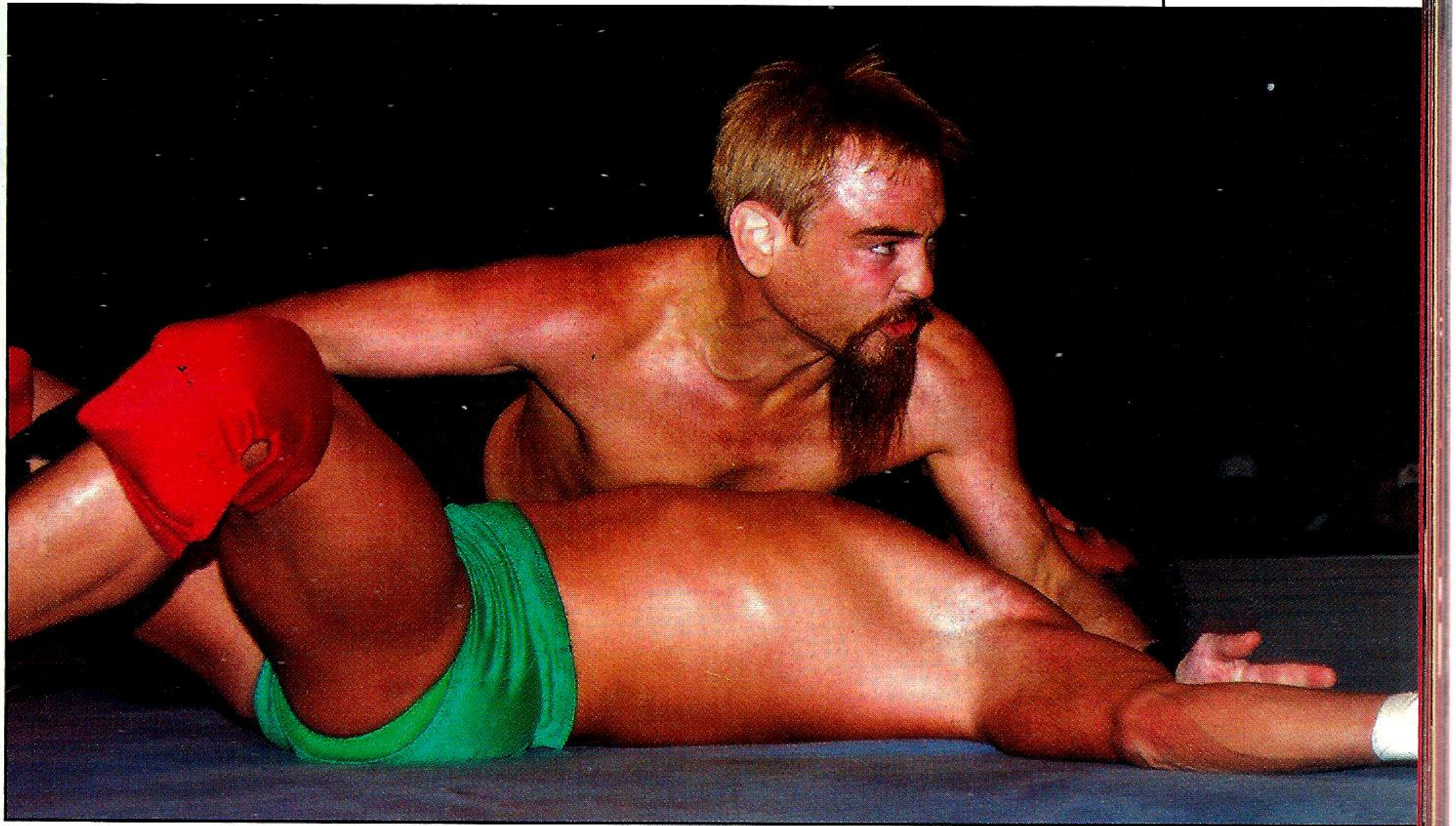
Spike DUDLEY

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'7"
WEIGHT: 155
HOMETOWN: Providence, RI
YEARS PRO: 10
MAJOR TITLES WON: ECW tag team (2 times), WWE European, WWE hardcore (7 times), WWE cruiserweight, WWE World tag team
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 277 in 1997, 121 in 1998, 84 in 1999, 62 in 2001, 85 in 2002, 76 in 2003, 51 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Inspirational (3rd runner-up in 2001)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

The runt of the Dudley litter has had a career that has defied expectations ... Enrolled at the APW Boot Camp to become a referee, but was convinced to try wrestling ... Joined ECW in August 1996 as the confused, pint-sized Dudley ... Loopy antics and underdog status made him a crowd favorite ... Became ECW's resident giant slayer, scoring upset wins over behemoths like Mabel (Viscera), Ulf Hermann, Sal E. Graziano, and One Man Gang ... Won the ECW tag team title with Mahoney twice in the summer of 1999 ... Suffered a knee injury in a World title match against Mike Awesome ... Surprised everyone by showing up in WWE and helping Buh Buh Ray and D-Von beat Edge and Christian for the tag belts on March 19, 2001 ... Ran afoul of his half-brothers with his sugary-sweet courtship of Molly Holly ... Formed an unlikely championship team with fellow ECW alumnus Tazz ... Used brass knuckles to beat William Regal for the European title ... Drafted to Smackdown in March 2004 ... Turned heel and surprised Rey Misterio Jr. for the cruiserweight title in July 2004 in an elaborate ruse he concocted with Buh Buh



Spike Dudley tries to hold down Nunzio

Spike DUDLEY

Ray and D-Von ... Held the title until December ... The littlest Dudley has turned into a credible and dangerous cruiserweight competitor and a legitimate title threat.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

The infamous bodyslam-turned-crowd surf. Bam Bam Bigelow beat Spike mercilessly and then threw his body four rows into the crowd. Instead of letting Spike fall in a mangled heap on the floor, ECW fans caught Spike and passed him triumphantly over their heads. It was one of those never-to-be-repeated moments that showcased Spike's willingness to put himself at risk of serious physical harm in order to entertain.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

As a heel, Spike shows surprising intensity, attacking from the opening bell. The violence of that initial assault can set the tone for the match.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

As gritty and experienced as he is, Spike is still tiny, even for a cruiserweight. He has to be aggressive all the time or risk being overpowered. If his opponent can weather that first attack, or beat Spike to the punch, he's in big trouble.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

The monsters. It's time for Spike to go back to slaying monsters. Heidenreich, Big Show, Kane, Snitsky, Masters, Morgan—you have all been warned!

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Buh Buh Ray and D-Von. Spike was entertaining when he bossed those two around last year but is doing a good job standing on his own now. He doesn't need his namesakes around.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Protein shakes. Seriously, Spike really needs to bulk up some if he wants to be taken seriously. Another 20 pounds of muscle mass (at least) would help.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Willing himself to wrestle against men two or three times his size. His bravado made his career.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Challenging Mike Awesome in ECW. Spike showed plenty of guts in that 2000 feud, but he paid an extremely high physical price.

WE SAID IT:

"I defy you to find someone who would have said Spike Dudley had the potential to hold WWE gold back in 1996. He's come a long way, and he should be proud of everything he has accomplished."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"I'm sorry, but I still don't buy Spike as a cruiserweight title contender. He tries to be a brawler, but at his size, those tactics just aren't effective. To me, he simply can't compare to Paul London, Rey Misterio Jr., or Chavo Guerrero Jr."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"You have to give Spike credit for his intestinal fortitude. He should never be underestimated. With him, the upset is possible at any time."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

Rob
VAN DAM ●●●●●

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'

WEIGHT: 237

HOMETOWN: Battle Creek, MI

YEARS PRO: 14

MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE Intercontinental (5 times), WWE hardcore (3 times), WWE Raw tag team (2 times), WWE Smackdown tag team, ECW TV, ECW tag team (2 times), SAPW tag team, All Star Wrestling heavyweight, NWC tag team

"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 262 in 1991, 173 in 1992, 121 in 1993, 129 in 1994, 199 in 1995, 51 in 1996, 32 in 1997, 14 in 1998, 2 in 1999, 24 in 2000, 59 in 2001, 1 in 2002, 10 in 2003, 28 in 2004

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Wrestler (1st runner-up in 2002), Tag Team (1st runner-up, with Sabu, in 1998), Match (2nd runner-up in 2002, 3rd runner-up in 2001, 1st runner-up in 1999), Feud (2nd runner-up in 1999), Most Popular (2002, 2001, 2nd runner-up in 2003, 1st runner-up in 2000), Comeback (2001)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Battle Creek, Michigan, native took the town's name to heart as a youth, studying tae kwon do, kickboxing, karate, aikido, and kendo ... Started wrestling in 1990 ... Wrestled throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Florida before joining WCW in 1993 ... Toured Japan later that year ... Got his big break in ECW, debuting to little fanfare in 1996 ... Claimed WCW and the WWF were in a bidding war for his services and adopted the nickname "Mr. Monday Night" ... Beat Jeff Hardy on the May 12, 1997, edition of *Raw,* even though he wasn't under contract to the WWF at the time ... Formed an unstable but highly successful team with Sabu ... Wrestled an electrifying series of matches with Jerry Lynn ... Held the ECW TV title for 23 months before being stripped due to injury ... Never got a chance to challenge for the ECW World title, as the company folded shortly after he returned from his broken leg ... Joined WWE as part of the WCW/ECW invasion ... Became one of the company's most popular stars in 2001 ... Ran out of steam and was criticized by some for "not wrestling the WWE style" ... Has been an extremely valuable member of the Smackdown mid-card ranks; but has never lived up to the world title expectations many have had for him since 1998 ... Still recovering from knee surgery at press time.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Losing to Steve Austin in a triangle match that also included Kurt Angle at No Mercy 2001. The WWE World title was on the line, and RVD was riding the biggest wave of popularity of his career. Many people thought it was finally his moment to shine. Instead, he was pinned by Austin. At Vengeance two months later, Van Dam wasn't even on the card, showing just how far he fell after that match.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

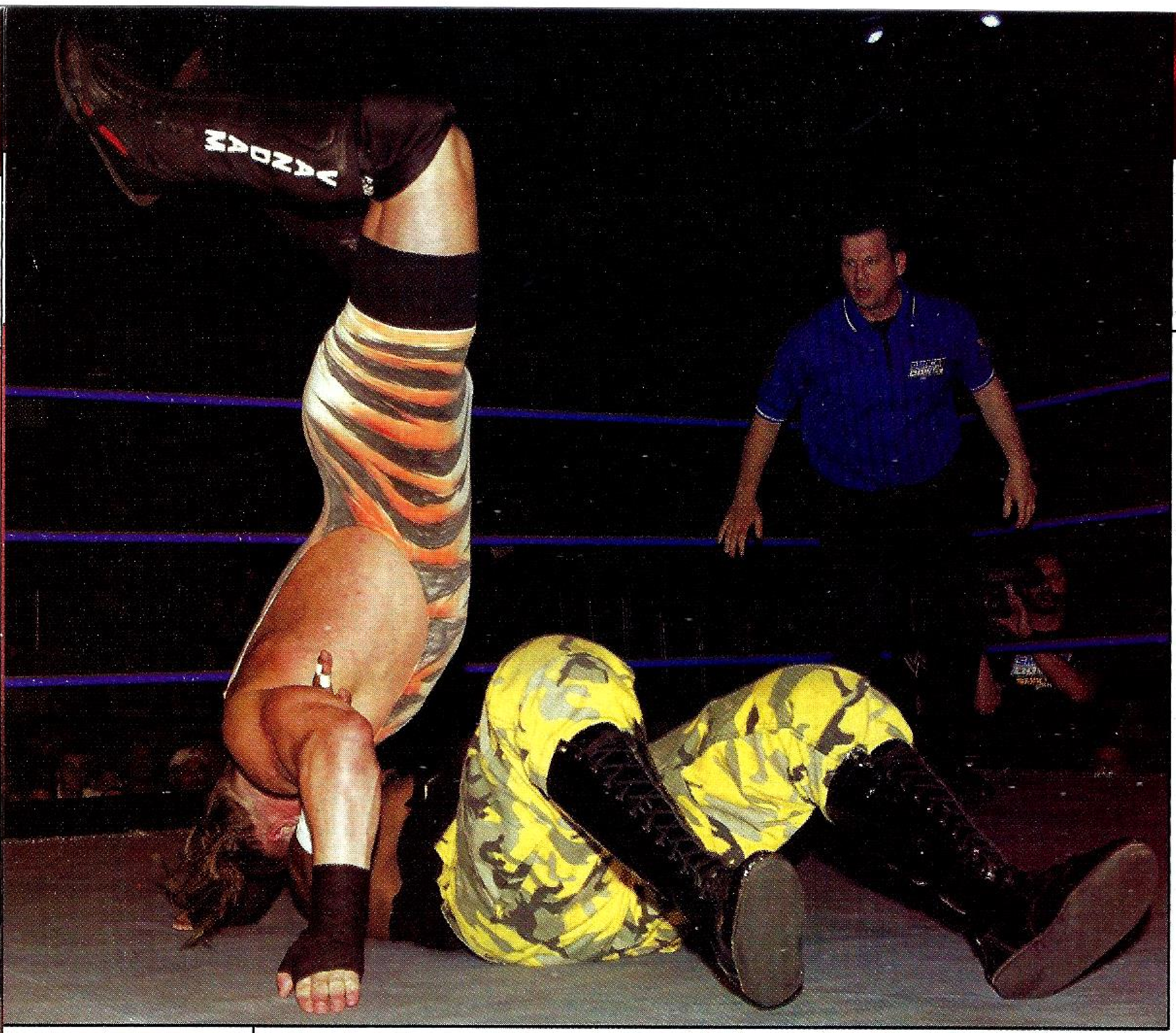
Van Dam is all business when he steps into the ring and wastes very little time popping opponents with side kicks, front kicks, and enzuigiris before throwing in the high-risk attacks. A sound strategy for him.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Almost never *shows* any real fire or passion. It's like RVD is adrenaline deficient. We know the fire and passion are there, but we need to *see* more of them.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

John Cena. Maybe the ECW One Night Stand pay-per-view will remind RVD of how good a bad guy he was. It Van Dam returned to his arrogant roots, he could be a perfect foil for Cena. He might just have what it takes to beat the Smackdown champ and finally live



RVD's standing moonsault is a thing of beauty

up to the expectations that have dogged him ever since he set foot in a WWE ring.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Van Dam should steer clear of the U.S. and Intercontinental titles. He has been a secondary champion for most of his career. Let's hope the time he spent recovering from his latest injury will remind him of what he really wants—a world championship.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Bill Alfonso. Van Dam is a classic example of a wrestler underachieving once he parted ways with his manager. Sure, he may have earned more money in WWE, but as a wrestler, he should be doing more. Maybe Alfonso could help RVD rediscover his killer instinct.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Becoming "Mr. Monday Night." There was no better way to incense the ECW faithful than by hinting at allegiances to the WWF or—God forbid!—WCW. By acting like he was too good for ECW, he made himself the company's greatest bad guy and, eventually, its hottest and most popular star.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Waiting too long to make a move for the ECW World title. Maybe Van Dam was waiting for a bigger payday before going for the gold. He waited himself into a hole out of which he has never fully climbed.

WE SAID IT:

"I remember when *PWI* named Ted DiBiase as the greatest wrestler never to win a world title. Unless Van Dam does something soon, he might take that dubious distinction from 'The Million-Dollar Man.'"

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

"There are some guys who take a job and do everything they can to climb the corporate ladder and get as close to the top as they can. Then there are other guys who punch in, punch out, collect a paycheck, and do the bare minimum to stay out of trouble. I hope RVD never falls into the latter category, but I fear he could."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"The ECW reunion card was custom-made for Van Dam. It's too bad he suffered his knee injury at the time he did. Still, with ECW on people's minds, now's the time for him to make a big move."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

M-N-M ●●●●●

VITAL STATISTICS

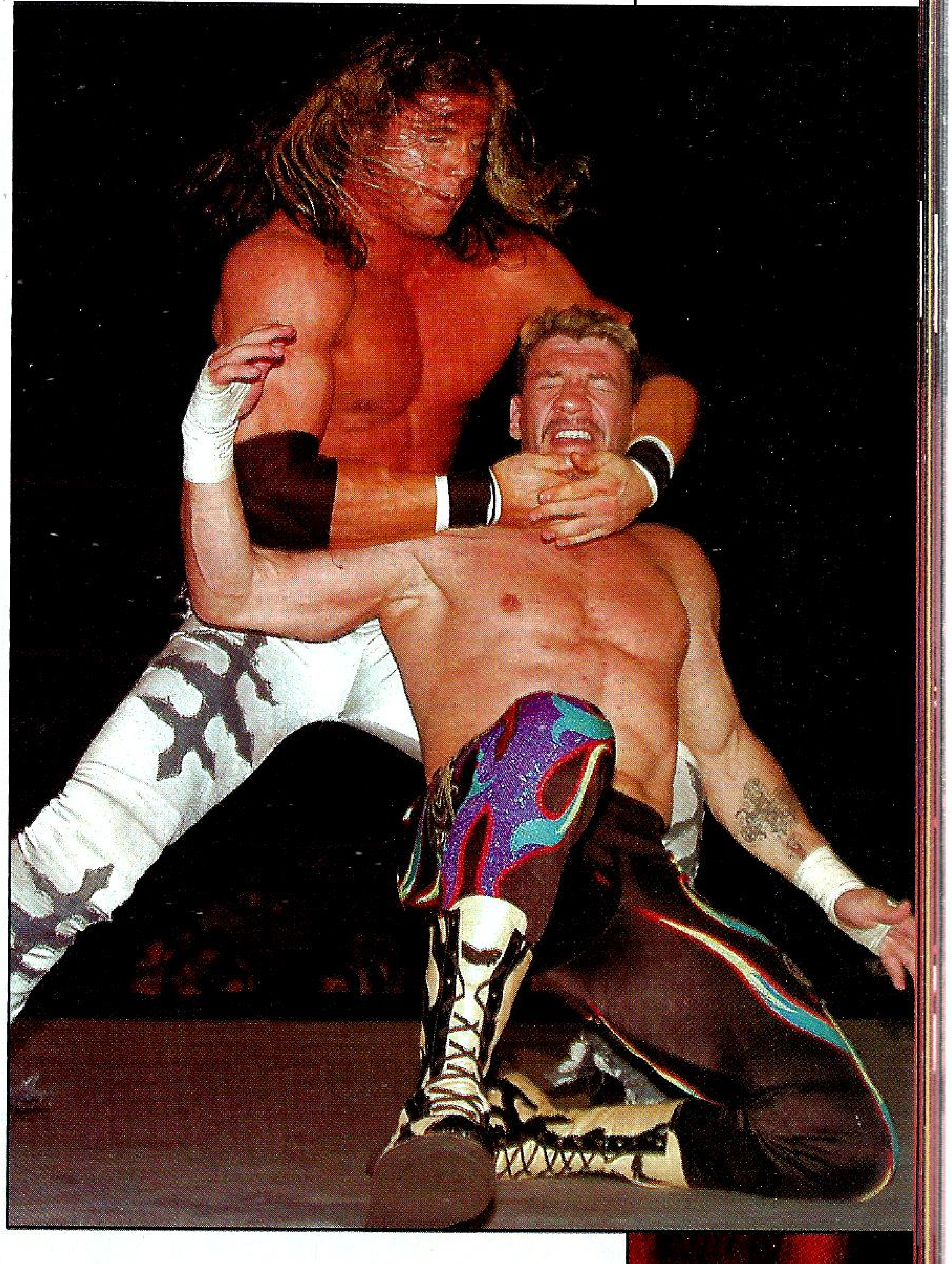
HEIGHT: 5'9" (Mercury); 6' (Nitro)
WEIGHT: 213 (Mercury); 204 (Nitro)
HOMETOWN: Fayetteville, NC (Mercury); Los Angeles, CA (Nitro)
YEARS PRO: 9 (Mercury); 2 (Nitro)
MAJOR TITLES WON: Smackdown tag team (together), OVW Southern tag team (together); 3PW heavyweight, MCW TV, TCW tag team, MCW tag team (2 times), NWA tag team, ATCW tag team, MCW cruiserweight, SCW junior heavyweight (3 times), IPWA light heavyweight, SCW tag team, OMEGA light heavyweight (2 times), NCW light heavyweight, NWA 2000 light heavyweight, MEWF tag team, AWC light heavyweight (all Mercury)
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 425 in 1997, 384 in 1998, 207 in 1999, 154 in 2000, 124 in 2001, 151 in 2002, 183 in 2003, 156 in 2004 (Mercury); 160 in 2004 (Nitro)
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Rookie of the Year (2nd runner-up in 2004) (Nitro)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

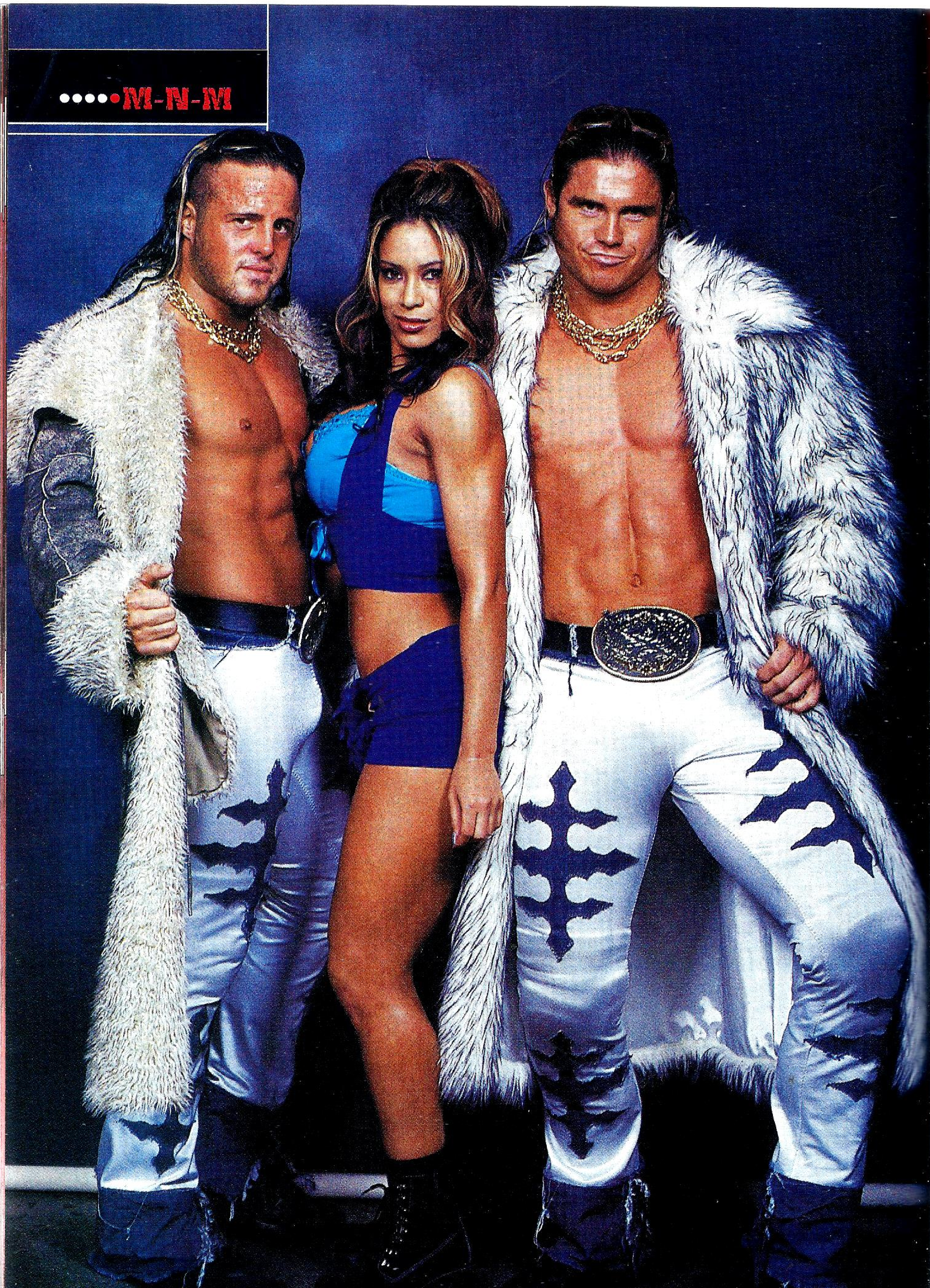
M-N-M may come across as a pair of brash young newcomers, but Joey Mercury brings the team a deceptive veteran presence ... Formerly known as Joey Matthews, he began wrestling in 1996 ... Made a name for himself on the independent circuit with runs in promotions such as the MEWF, SCW, and OMEGA ... Briefly landed spots in WCW and ECW with partner Christian York, but both promotions went belly-up before Matthews and York could make much headway ... Signed a WWE developmental deal but was released in a cost-cutting move ... Joined OVW and met John Hennigan (Johnny Nitro) ... Nitro was one of the winners of the third *Tough Enough* contest and had been given a role as Eric Bischoff's Raw apprentice ... Nitro was reassigned to OVW, and M-N-M was born ... Matthews and Nitro recruited Melina as their valet and won the OVW Southern tag team title on November 10, 2004 ... Upset the Dudleys in one memorable match ... Joined Smackdown and won the tag belts in their very first televised match, capitalizing on dissension between Eddie Guerrero and Rey Misterio Jr.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Beating Mac Johnson and Seth Skyfire to win the OVW Southern tag title. M-N-M went from being an entertaining tag act to the WWE fast track with this huge title win.



Johnny Nitro wasn't intimidated by "Latino Heat"



●●●●● STRONGEST PART OF THEIR MATCHES:

Although most red-blooded males would say it's Melina's ring entrance, we'll dig a bit deeper and say M-N-M's biggest strength is Mercury's ring generalship. Mercury has watched chances at greatness slip through his fingers several times before, and he's not about to let this latest opportunity pass him by. He is constantly giving feedback to Nitro and communicating with him throughout their matches. Nitro is fortunate to have such a dedicated partner and mentor.

●●●●● WEAKEST PART OF THEIR MATCHES:

M-N-M still has yet to be tested against elite teams (though they did snag that win over the Dudleys in OVW). Nitro is still a virtual rookie and will make mistakes, particularly against experienced competition. That is a weakness M-N-M will have to overcome quickly.

●●●●● WHOM THEY WANT TO FACE:

M-N-M isn't picky. Give them a challenging tag team, and they'll answer the call.

●●●●● WHOM THEY OUGHT TO AVOID:

M-N-M should be wary of forming many alliances. They have a certain electricity and chemistry on their own. They shouldn't let any hangers-on try to gravy train off their momentum.

●●●●● SHOULD BE ADDED TO THEIR REPERTOIRE:

The Rockerplex. Shawn Michaels and Marty Jannetty used to use a double-team move in which Jannetty lifted his opponent into a vertical suplex and Michaels came off the top rope with a flying bodypress. M-N-M could duplicate the move with a twist, maybe a snap suplex with a frog splash, or a stall suplex into a missile dropkick. It's a flashy signature move that they could pull off with relative ease.

●●●●● SMARTEST MOVE THEY EVER MADE:

Forming M-N-M. One year ago, Matthews and Nitro weren't on the WWE talent scouts' radar at all. But like two refugees from the Land of Misfit Toys, they found one each other, and the whole was much greater than the sum of its parts. By pairing up and adding Melina to the act, they became one of the hottest properties on the developmental scene. Look where they are today.

●●●●● BIGGEST MISTAKE THEY EVER MADE:

So far, M-N-M has been virtually mistake-free. They ran their mouths and won title belts. Who can argue with that game plan?

●●●●● WE SAID IT:

"I happened to be there in Louisville the day M-N-M won the OVW Southern tag title, and I was extremely impressed with them. I'm glad WWE recognized Mercury and Nitro had a winning formula and didn't try to tinker with it when M-N-M came to WWE."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"It was a smart move of them to go right after Rey and Eddie when they did, since that team was on the verge of imploding already. M-N-M nudged them over the edge and walked away with the belts. That shows me that they're pretty smart guys."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"M-N-M has the raw potential to be a great team, but it all depends on whether there are enough other teams on Smackdown for them to face. It would be a real shame if they had to face Hardcore Holly and Charlie Haas and other makeshift teams every night."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

Rey MISTERIO Jr.

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'3"
WEIGHT: 163
HOMETOWN: San Diego, CA
YEARS PRO: 16

MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW/WWE cruiserweight (8 times), Smackdown tag team (3 times), WCW World tag team (3 times), WCW cruiserweight tag team, AAA welterweight (5 times), WWA lightweight (3 times), Mexican National welterweight, WWA welterweight (3 times), WWA tag team, Mexican National trios, WWC junior heavyweight, AAA lightweight (2 times)

"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 101 in 1994, 18 in 1995, 7 in 1996, 29 in 1997, 107 in 1998, 4 in 1999, 198 in 2001, 58 in 2002, 19 in 2003, 22 in 2004

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Inspirational (3rd runner-up in 2003 and in 1996), Most Popular (3rd runner-up in 2003), Match (1st runner-up in 1997, 2nd runner-up in 2002, 3rd runner-up in 1995)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Widely considered to be the best cruiserweight in wrestling history, Misterio debuted at age 15 in California as Colibiri ("hummingbird") ... Was a huge star in Mexico from 1992 through 1995 ... Brought his Luchador style to ECW in a lightning-paced series against Psicosis, giving him his first real exposure in the U.S. ... Impressed WCW Executive Vice President Eric Bischoff at the 1996 World Wrestling Peace Festival and was signed by WCW ... Dominated the cruiserweight division and also proved quite capable of competing against much larger opponents ... Forced to shed his trademark mask as the result of a tag team loss to Kevin Nash and Scott Hall at SuperBrawl IX in 1999 ... Joined WWE in July 2002 and picked up where he left off, winning cruiserweight titles ... Formed championship teams with Edge, Rob Van Dam, and Eddie Guerrero and became one of Smackdown's most beloved wrestlers ... Currently embroiled in an intense feud with Guerrero.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Scoring an upset pinfall over Kevin Nash on *Nitro* one night after being forced to unmask. Misterio gave up almost two feet in height and about 200 pounds, but showed that none of that necessarily mattered. It was sweet vengeance on one of his most hated rivals.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

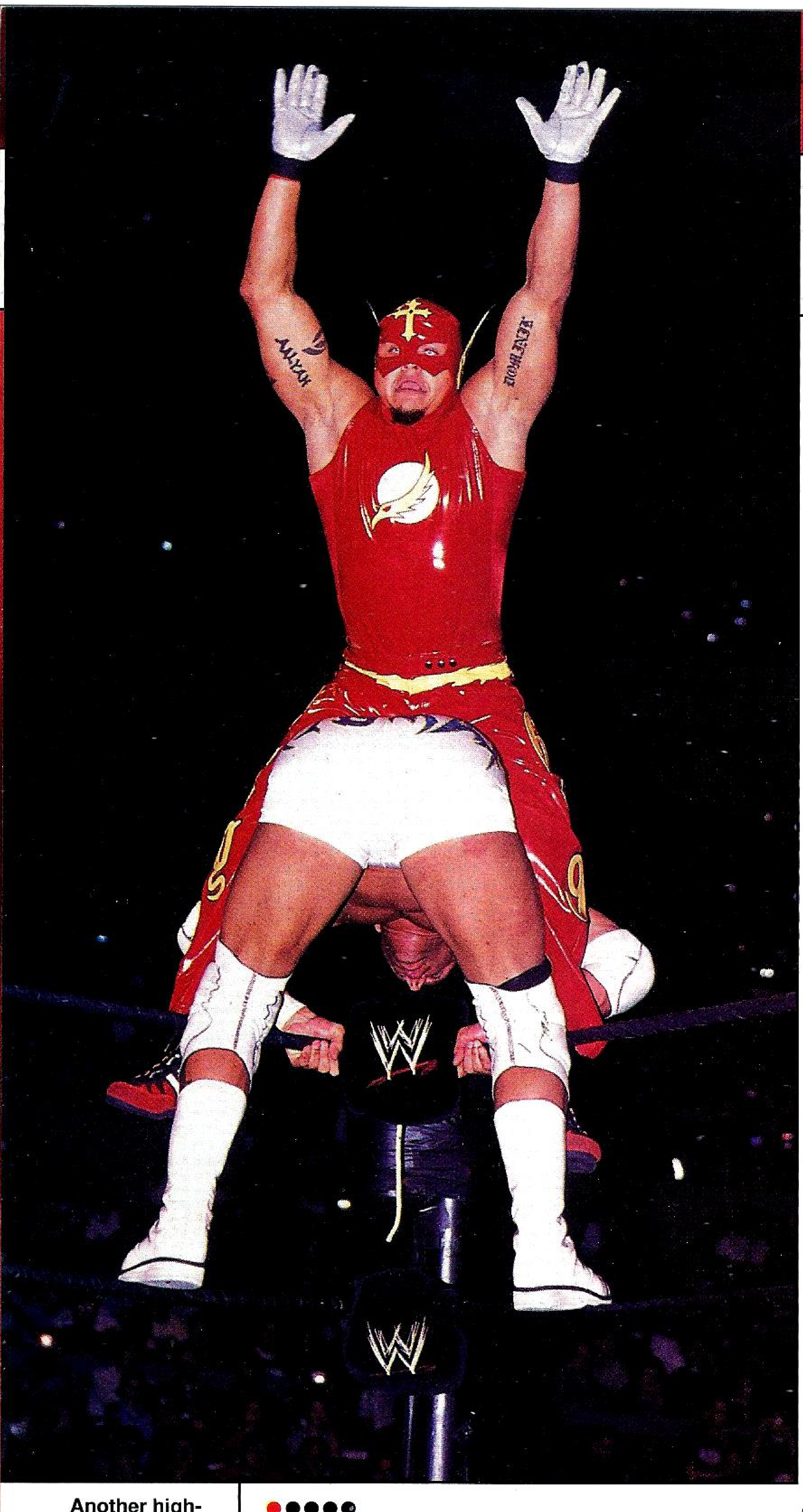
Unmatched balance. No one in wrestling—or perhaps any sport—has the preternatural coordination of Rey Jr. Like a cat, he always seems to land on his feet, turning slams, power bombs, and back bodydrops into offensive maneuvers. A wonder to watch.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Misterio has added an impressive bit of muscular definition and pure mass since joining WWE, but he's still one of the smallest wrestlers anywhere. He will always give up size and strength. That's just the way he's built. But it *is* a weakness, albeit one he long ago learned to work around.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Super Crazy, Psicosis, Ultimo Dragon, and Juventud Guerrera. All of these internationally respected cruiserweights have either been in WWE in the last two years or are scheduled to start imminently. Rey has gotten tired of waiting. He wants to match his formidable Luchador skills against similarly experienced opponents on the WWE stage.



Another high-risk move from Rey Misterio Jr.

●●●●● SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

His mask. Okay, we want him to *keep* it, not add it. Under no circumstances should Rey be without it. Like Samson's hair, it is the source of his strength.

●●●●● SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Facing Psicosis at the ECW Arena nearly a decade ago. Misterio took a bit of Mexico into Philly, and it made him a sensation. If he had faced a regular ECW competitor, he might not have looked as good. Who knows where he would be today.

●●●●● BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Taking on The Big Show. Big Show nearly snapped Little Rey's spine when he slammed him into a cornerpost while Rey was strapped to a backboard at Backlash 2003. One of the most sickening moments in wrestling history.

●●●●● WE SAID IT:

"One of the most decorated wrestlers of our time and for good reason. Rey helped revolutionize wrestling as we know it."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

"I've gone back and forth on this, but I'm finally willing to accept Rey as a world title contender. He's certainly one of the most exciting wrestlers anywhere and a ratings draw. I wouldn't mind seeing him challenge—or maybe even win—a world title on pay-per-view."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"It's remarkable that Rey has remained relatively healthy after all those years of high-flying. He takes great care of himself, and with more good luck, can continue to wow audiences for years to come."

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

●●●●● WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

The big boys. Rey has already gone through that giant killer stage, with mixed success (Big Show very nearly killed him). We know he has heart. We know he can outsmart the lumbering lummoxes. We don't want to see him do it anymore, or risk getting himself seriously injured. Tag team, cruiserweight, and maybe U.S. title contention suits him best.

NUNZIO

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'9"
WEIGHT: 209
HOMETOWN: Howard Beach, NY
YEARS PRO: 14
MAJOR TITLES WON: ECW tag team (2 times), USA Pro tag team
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 325 in 1996, 232 in 1997, 215 in 1998, 193 in 1999, 109 in 2000, 141 in 2001, 188 in 2002, 79 in 2003, 111 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

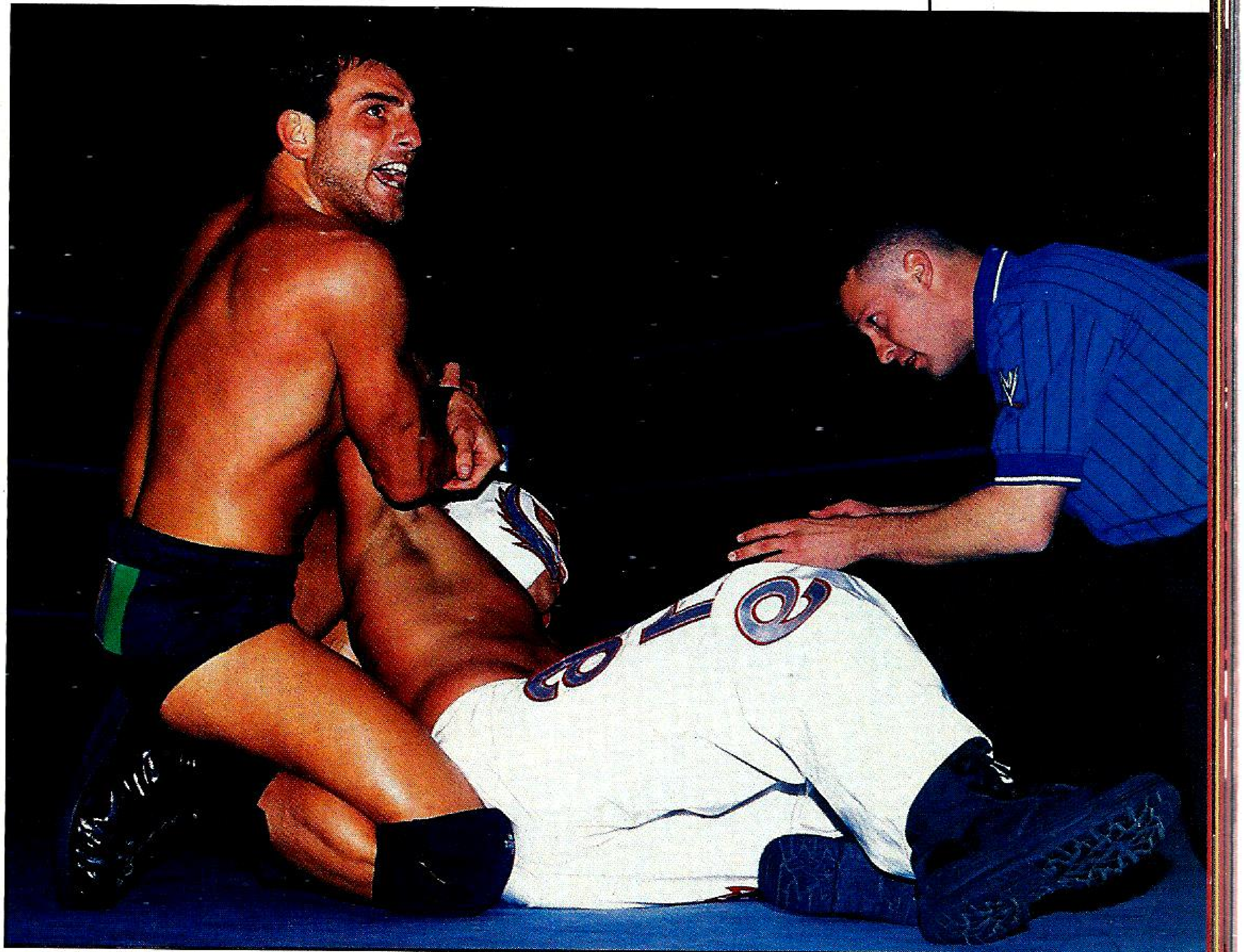
"The Sicilian Shooter" was trained by Billy Robinson and started wrestling in 1991 ... Robinson put Nunzio in touch with legendary technicians Lou Thesz and Danny Hodge, who shared a bit of their wealth of grappling knowledge ... Joined ECW in 1995 as Little Guido, part of The Full-Blooded Italians along with the decidedly non-Italian J.T. Smith ... Later added non-Italians Tracey Smothers and Tommy Rich to the mix ... Worked his way up from comedy matches to title contention ... Teamed with Smothers to win the ECW tag title in 1997, defeating the team of Kronus and New Jack ... Was an ECW mainstay until that company's demise ... Regained the tag belts with Tony Mamaluke on August 26, 2000 ... Joined WWE in December 2002 as Jamie Noble's cousin, attacking Crash Holly ... Reformed the FBI with Chuck Palumbo and Johnny Stamboli ... Remains one of the most overlooked, yet universally respected, wrestlers on the Smackdown roster.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

For WWE audiences, Nunzio's most memorable moment came when he planted himself ringside during the 2004 Royal Rumble, intent on sneaking in for an easy victory late in the match. John Cena foiled his plan, but it was vintage Nunzio—silly enough to be memorable, but actually quite a viable and devious strategy. Too bad it didn't work.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Laugh at his FBI antics all you want. Nunzio is one of wrestling's most danger-



Nunzio can be good at keeping a foe grounded

NUNZIO

ous shooters and one of the sport's most feared technicians. Pound-for-pound, he might be the top submission wrestler in the game.

•••••

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

His lack of size is a problem for him at all times. Listed at a generous 5'9" and 209 pounds, Nunzio is smaller than many fans, let alone the giants of WWE. All those shootfighting skills don't mean much when you're giving up 60 pounds of muscle to an opponent. That's why he's most effective as part of a tag team.

•••••

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Conventional wisdom says Nunzio should want to compete against men his own size and make a serious run at the cruiserweight title, and that makes sense. But knowing Nunzio, he would prefer to test his grappling skills against some of the other wrestlers with shootfighting and grappling experience. Put him in the ring against William Regal, Kurt Angle, and Daniel Puder, with submission rules in effect, and Nunzio would be a happy man.

•••••

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Comedy wrestlers. By this stage of his career, Nunzio should have outgrown the comedy role. Now that the FBI is defunct, he should focus on re-establishing himself as a serious wrestler. Anything else would be a step backward.

•••••

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

The guillotine choke. Probably the most basic—yet effective—hold in ground grappling. It starts as a simple front facelock, and then the person executing the hold brings his forearm against his opponent's jugular and stops the flow of blood to the brain. Technically a chokehold (but so was Tazz' *katahajime),* but he could at least use it to weaken an opponent and set him up for another move. Not flashy, but easy to execute and effective.

•••••

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Staying loyal to ECW even during the tough times. He earned a reputation as a professional and a company man, and that helped him find work in WWE.

•••••

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Bringing back the FBI in WWE. In ECW, The Full-Blooded Italians were funny because (other than Nunzio) none of them was Italian. In WWE, Nunzio tried to play the same gimmick straight, and it came off like a lame *Sopranos* imitation. *Fuhgeddaboudit!*

•••••

WE SAID IT:

"Nunzio will always be a good role player. He can carry a tag team, challenge for the cruiserweight title, and is equally effective doing comedy bits as he is wrestling a straight match. That kind of versatility is very important."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"Personally, I'd like to see Nunzio try his hand in Ring of Honor. The pure title seems to be custom-made for a man of his abilities."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

"The ECW One Night Stand pay-per-view might be a big relaunching point for Nunzio. I hope he can get a little momentum from the ECW reunion and get a fresh push in WWE. He's been treading water for a while now."

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

The UNDERTAKER

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'9"
WEIGHT: 304
HOMETOWN: Dallas, TX
YEARS PRO: 16
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE World (4 times), WWE World tag team (6 times), WWF hardcore, WCW World tag team, USWA heavyweight, USWA Texas
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 21 in 1992, 46 in 1993, 23 in 1994, 14 in 1995, 19 in 1996, 6 in 1997, 5 in 1998, 8 in 1999, 11 in 2001, 2 in 2002, 18 in 2003, 23 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Feud (1991, 2nd runner-up in 1996), Match (1998, 2nd runner-up in 1997), Tag Team (1st runner-up, with Kane, 2001; 3rd runner-up, with Kane, in 1998), Most Improved (2nd runner-up in 1991), Inspirational (1st runner-up in 1992), Most Popular (2nd runner-up in 1994 and in 1992, 3rd runner-up in 1996), Most Hated (1st runner-up in 1991, 2nd runner-up in 1999), Comeback (2nd runner-up in 2000 and in 1994), Wrestler (2nd runner-up in 1997, 3rd runner-up in 2002)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

"The Dead Man" has been one of the most enduring figures in wrestling history ... Debuted as The Master of Pain in 1989 in the USWA, then competed as The Punisher ... Joined WCW as "Mean" Mark Callous, a mid-carder ... Jumped to the WWF as Brother Love's protege, The Undertaker, and then signed with manager Paul Bearer ... Beat Hulk Hogan for the WWF World title at the 1991 Survivor Series with help from Ric Flair ... Turned fan favorite in a feud with Jake Roberts and battled every wacko to enter the promotion over the next several years ... Regained the World title by beating Sid Vicious at WrestleMania XIII ... Feuded with half-brother Kane and Mankind before turning heel again and creating the unholy Ministry of Darkness ... Feuded with Steve Austin and The Rock before being shelved with a torn pectoral muscle ... Returned at Judgment Day 2000 with his "American Badass" biker persona ... Pinned Triple-H at WrestleMania X7 ... Went back to his evil ways in November 2001 and was drafted to Raw ... Again captured the World title with another win over Hogan at Judgment Day 2002 ... Became a fan favorite once more ... Extended his WrestleMania unbeaten streak to 13-0 with a huge win over Randy Orton at WrestleMania 21.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Beating Hogan for his first WWF World title in 1991. Not only did he do what no other "monster heel" had been unable to do in pinning Hogan, but he also rubbed shoulders with Hogan and Ric Flair in the hottest feud in all of wrestling. It was clear that The Undertaker had arrived.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

At one time, UT's biggest strength was his ability to overpower an opponent from bell to bell and do his famous situp after taking finishing move after finishing move. As impressive as that was, what has been even more impressive is how he has incorporated submission grappling into his game, allowing him to catch opponents expecting a power match with a Dragon sleeper or triangle choke. Why take all those finishing moves when he can earn a submission victory instead?

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

'Taker's wife, Sara, has been credited with helping him get leaner and more fit. This subtle shift has helped 'Taker extend his career and remain a viable main event talent. However, Undertaker has had 16 years of intense battles that have weakened him considerably. Fortunately, UT has recognized this fact and moved to a part-time schedule. Physically, he probably couldn't handle a full-time schedule anymore.

Undertaker goes right for Heidenreich's throat

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

There are very few wrestlers Undertaker has not faced already and beaten decisively. He should be looking for new challenges that he has never taken on: Sting, Abyss, Sabu, Blaster Lasheley. Bring on the former greats and the rising stars. 'Taker is ready.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Kane. Is anyone clamoring to see *Rocky VI?* How about Kane-UT 6,000?

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Even more mixed martial arts-style submission holds. 'Taker is a huge UFC fan. He should be keeping his eyes open for more holds to incorporate into his game.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Burying Paul Bearer in that vat of cement last year. Okay, it may not have been the most realistic storyline of all-time, but it made a point. UT's days as a walking dead man were dead and buried. It was symbolic ... see?

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Aligning with Vince McMahon. Vince as 'Taker's "higher power"? Other than the fact that Vinnie Mac is the guy who signs the checks, it never made any sense at all. The Undertaker should never be another man's flunkie.

WE SAID IT:

"As The Undertaker begins to wind down his career, it becomes more and more clear to me that no one else will ever match what he has achieved in WWE. From the unbeaten streak at WrestleMania to the incredible staying power, he truly is a phenom."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"It takes a big man to recognize his own shortcomings, and that's just what Undertaker has done throughout his career. He is constantly reinventing himself, adding new moves, adjusting his schedule, keeping us guessing. That's how he has stayed a featured attraction for such a long time."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

"He may have slowed down a few steps over the years, but he still gets one of the loudest ovations of anyone in WWE. I could see him winning another world title or two before he goes back to the crypt for good."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

Orlando JORDAN ●●●●●

●●●●● VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'4"
WEIGHT: 250
HOMETOWN: Miami, FL
YEARS PRO: 7
MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE U.S., Maryland Championship Wrestling heavyweight
***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 175 in 2003, 137 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

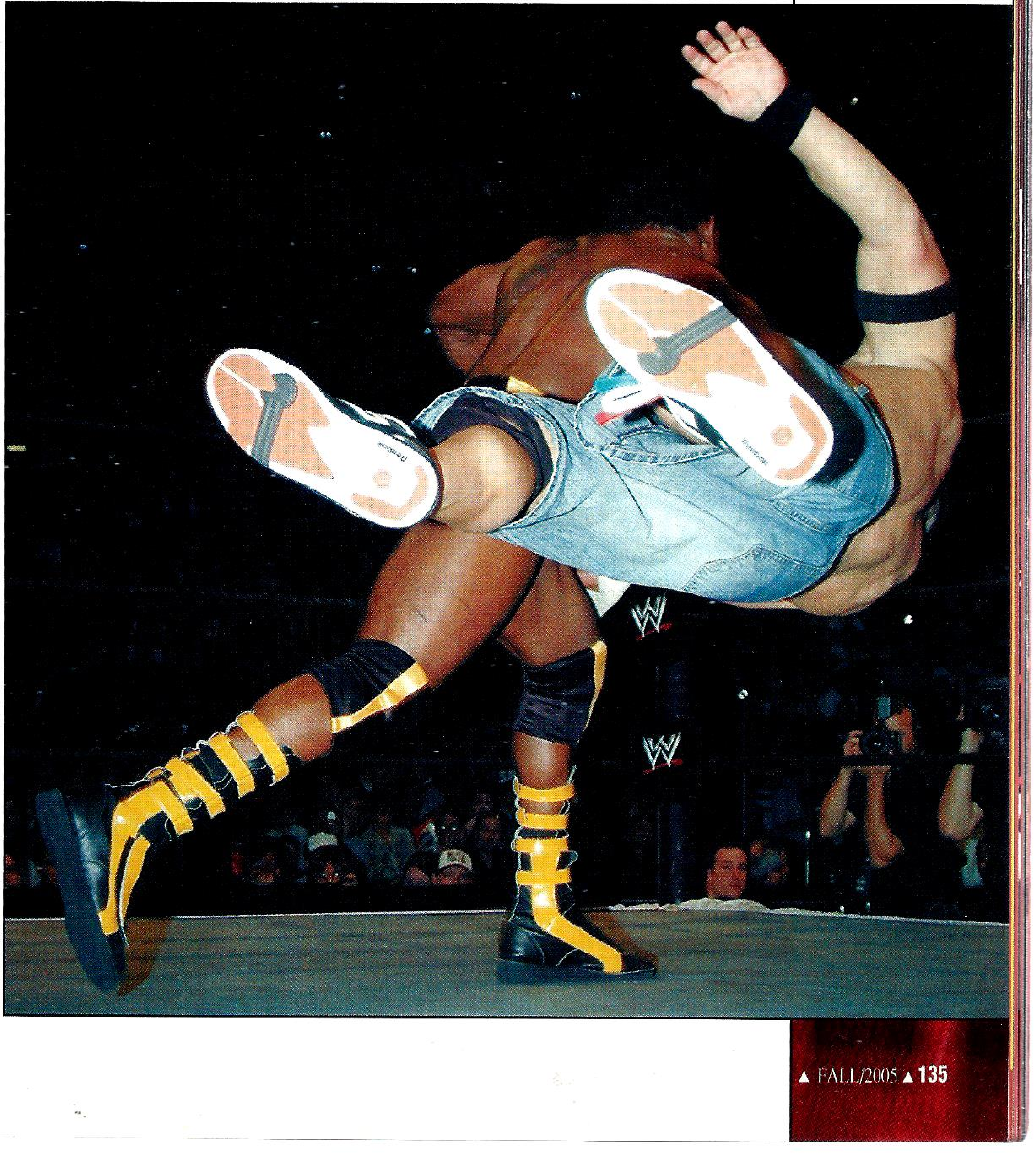
●●●●● CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Prized pupil of Rocky Johnson also trained at the Bonebreakers wrestling school in Maryland ... Made his pro debut in 1998 in Maryland Championship Wrestling ... Signed with WWE and joined the Smackdown roster in mid-2003 ... Got his big break by aligning himself with John Bradshaw Layfield on the August 5, 2004, edition of *Smackdown* ... Appointed JBL's chief of staff the following week ... As JBL's flunky—er, adviser—Jordan found himself fighting losing battles against The Undertaker, Booker T, and The Big Show ... Upset John Cena to win the U.S. title on March 3, 2005, after a healthy amount of interference from JBL and The Basham Brothers ... Remains committed to helping JBL regain the Smackdown title from Cena.

●●●●● DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Jumping on board that JBL gravy train. Just like that, Jordan was one of Smackdown's featured stars (he was virtually invisible before that happened).

Jordan already has one big win over Cena on his resume



Orlando JORDAN

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STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Jordan has his best starts when he has the luxury of JBL creating distractions for him outside the ring. With JBL at ringside, Jordan is most dangerous in the first three minutes of his matches. Without JBL, it tends to take longer for Jordan to hit his stride.

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WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Seems to have forgotten the swinging neckbreaker, sitdown jawbreaker, and running powerslam that got him to WWE in the first place. His offensive arsenal now consists almost exclusively of kicks and punches.

●●●●●

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Former headliners in the midst of other feuds. Take Rey Misterio Jr., for instance. Jordan could take advantage of Rey's preoccupation with Eddie Guerrero and perhaps steal a win over him to push him higher in the Smackdown title rankings. He has to pick and chose opponents that will advance his standing.

●●●●●

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

The Big Show. Show has dominated Jordan in previous encounters, and the big man might want to recover the U.S. title he previously held. If he faces Show at this stage of his career, Jordan will have another thing in common with JBL—they'll both be ex-champions.

●●●●●

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

An ego. Seriously, Jordan has been ridiculously content to remain JBL's stooge. If he ever wants to get respect on his own, he needs to start taking more pride in his matches and fighting for himself rather than on behalf of JBL.

●●●●●

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Accepting JBL's offer to be his chief of staff. But now it's time to resign.

●●●●●

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Not giving props to The Undertaker. Jordan was sacrificed by "The Dead Man" and lashed to 'Taker's symbol as a message to JBL last year. Jordan might have gotten a little bit of leniency if he hadn't run his mouth and said 'Taker was old and washed up. He sealed his own fate.

●●●●●

WE SAID IT:

"Orlando Jordan is living proof that good things happen if you happen to be in the right place at the right time. Nothing he does particularly impresses me, but he somehow got a U.S. title run and regularly main-events episodes of *Smackdown.*"

—Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz

"Even after seven years in the sport, he's still a little green. Over time he should be better able to mix his technical skills with his brawling skills and become a more complete wrestler. But if he gets lazy and relies on others to interfere on his behalf, his skills could and probably will stagnate. Then he's in some real trouble."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

"Jordan is another one of those underrated wrestlers people tend to overlook. He may not have won the U.S. title using the most honorable of means, but he has proven to be a decent champion, and he's an incredible physical specimen. I think he's slowly starting to win respect."

—Publisher Stu Saks

Jeff JARRETT

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'10"
WEIGHT: 230
HOMETOWN: Nashville, TN
YEARS PRO: 19
MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW World (4 times), NWA heavyweight (3 times), NWA North American, WWF Intercontinental (6 times), WWF World tag team, WCW U.S. (2 times), WWF European, World Wrestling All-Stars heavyweight (2 times) CWA International tag team (2 times), Southern tag team (4 times), NWA Mid-America (5 times), World Class light heavyweight (2 times), CWA heavyweight, WCWA tag team (3 times), USWA tag team (14 times), USWA Southern (8 times), USWA Western States tag team, USWA heavyweight (3 times), Pennsylvania Championship Wrestling U.S., NWA Cyberspace heavyweight
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 28 in 1991, 26 in 1992, 22 in 1993, 35 in 1994, 11 in 1995, 26 in 1996, 17 in 1997, 43 in 1998, 36 in 1999, 5 in 2000, 24 in 2001, 24 in 2002, 15 in 2003, 12 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Feud (1992, 2nd runner-up in 1995 and in 2000, 3rd runner-up in 2003), Most Improved (3rd runner-up in 1988, 2nd runner-up in 1989), Tag Team (3rd runner-up, with Robert Fulller, in 1991), Match (1st runner-up in 1995), Most Hated (3rd runner-up in 2000 and in 2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Second-generation star debuted in 1986 at the age of 18 … Was a huge fan favorite in Tennessee and Texas, winning championships all over the place … USWA star made headlines by attending a WWF card in Nashville in 1992 and issuing a verbal challenge to Bret Hart for the Intercontinental title … Back then, the WWF rarely acknowledged other promotions … Unfortunately, Hart lost the title before the interpromotional match could happen … Signed with the WWF and beat Razor Ramon for the I-C title at the 1995 Royal Rumble … After two years as a wannabe country singer, he jumped to WCW, where Ric Flair offered him a spot in The Four Horsemen, creating dissension within the faction … Returned to the WWF in 1997 and won three more I-C titles (for a total of six) and formed a championship team with Owen Hart … Lost the I-C belt to Chyna in a "Good Housekeeping" match at No Mercy 1999 and returned to WCW the night after hinting he would rather take the belt to WCW than lose to a woman (his WWF contract had expired before No Mercy) … Became Vince Russo's "Chosen One" and won four World titles before WCW folded … Won the World Wrestling All-Stars title … In June 2002, he and his father, Jerry, launched NWA Total Nonstop Action, designed to be an alternative to WWE … Jarrett has dominated the company since its inception, holding the NWA title three times … Might finally be ready to accept a lesser role in the company after dropping the title to A.J. Styles at Hard Justice.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Being offered that spot in the Horsemen. When Flair gave Jarrett his support, it gave the former "Double-J" more credibility than he ever had before. If Flair says you're good enough to be a Horseman and will go to the mat for you, you must be a hell of a wrestler.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Jarrett is one of the top ring generals in the game. He always knows where he is in the ring and wisely conserves his energy. He rarely makes tactical errors (though he's been known to screw up the execution from time to time). As a heel, he rarely gets the credit he is due.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Jarrett is personality-impaired. People just despise him, but not necessarily in a way that makes them want to pay to see if he'll lose a big match. Fans are just sick of seeing him in main events. It's like the Triple-H backlash multiplied by four. Making matters worse,

●●●●●Jeff JARRETT

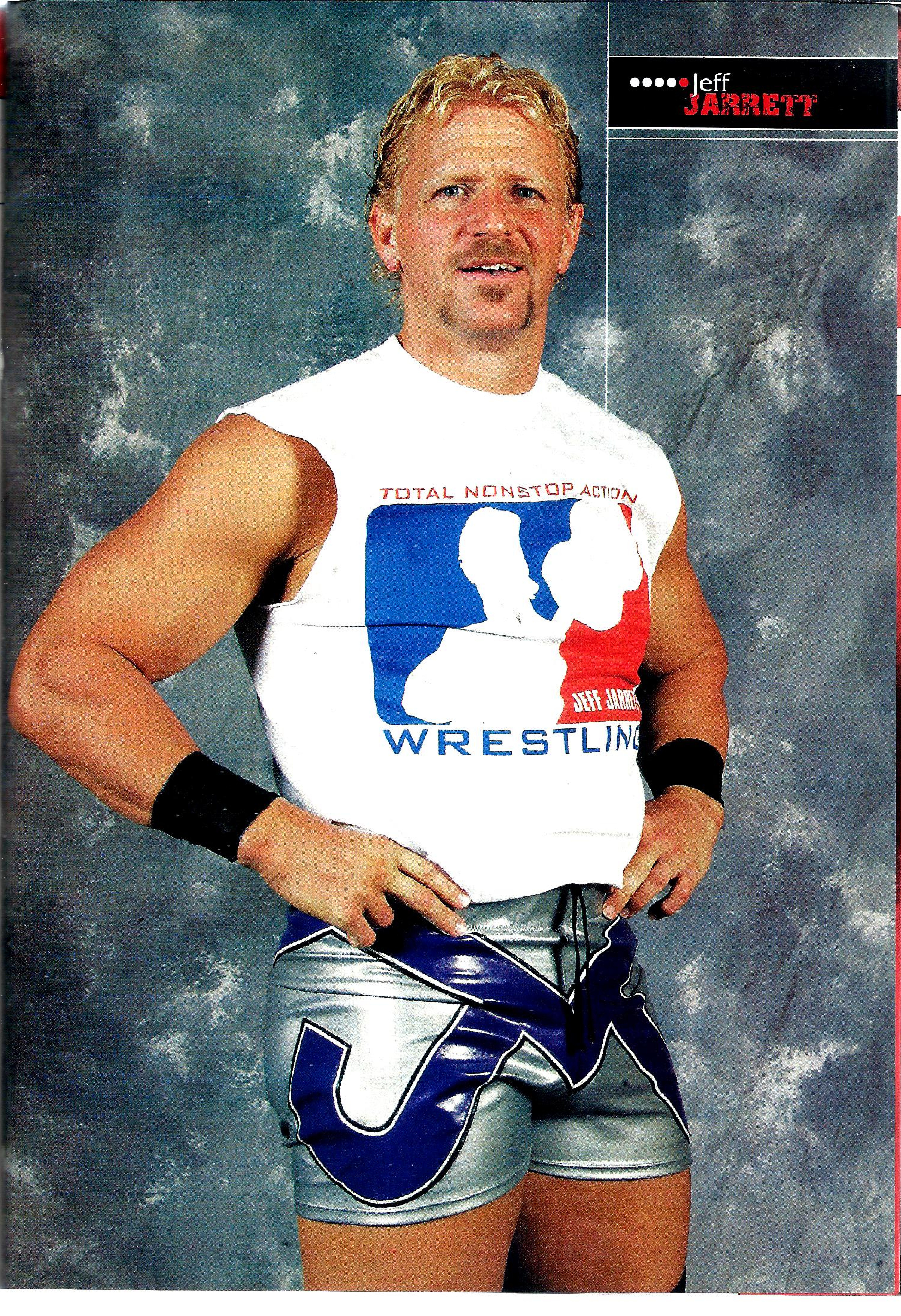

TOTAL NONSTOP ACTION
JEFF JARRETT
WRESTLING

Photo By Lee South/TNA Wrestling

Jarrett takes out DDP with a stroke

Jarrett's 2005 promos sound almost exactly the same as his 1997 promos, contributing to the strange deja vu feeling.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

He *wants* to face Styles and regain the NWA title. He *should* face Chris Sabin, Shocker, and Sonny Siaki and use his veteran star status to elevate younger names. Remember all the veterans who helped you on the way up, Jeff?

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

The NWA champion, for reasons we just detailed.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

In Jarrett's case, we're going to go with addition by subtraction. He needs to get rid of that guitar. How is it that he ditched his wannabe country music star gimmick a decade ago, but still lugs guitars around with him everywhere he goes? Is there anything in wrestling more stale than a Jeff Jarrett guitar shot? For Pete's sake, Jeff, we know you can wrestle when you want to.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Launching TNA. Most critics thought TNA would be gone in six months (or six weeks). Here we are, three years later, and it's still kicking.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Threatening to leave WWE without losing the Intercontinental championship in 1999. Jarrett thought he had the upper hand, having already worked out a WCW deal, but nobody one-ups Vince McMahon. If the Jarretts hadn't started TNA, Jeff wouldn't have many viable options in wrestling today. No wonder he works so hard to keep TNA afloat!

WE SAID IT:

"Jarrett is a great old school, Memphis-style wrestler. He just doesn't have the flash or star power to be the face of TNA at this stage of his career. The sooner he realizes that, the better for all involved."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker

"You can't argue with Jarrett's success. He has won major titles in every company he's ever competed in. That doesn't happen by accident. The guy has a lot more talent than some people, for whatever reason, want to acknowledge."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"Jarrett may have collected a truckload of belts, but how many five-star matches can you remember him having? He may have a Midas touch, but the fact that he rarely has a really memorable match is very telling."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

A.J. STYLES

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 5'9"
WEIGHT: 202
HOMETOWN: Gainesville, GA
YEARS PRO: 6
MAJOR TITLES WON: NWA heavyweight (3 times), TNA X (4 times), NWA tag team (2 times), Ring of Honor pure, Ring of Honor tag team, IWA Mid-South heavyweight, Natural heavyweight, NWA Wildside TV (3 times), IPW heavyweight, NWA Georgia heavyweight, World Wrestling All-Stars cruiserweight, All Access heavyweight, CWF heavyweight, MXPW TV
***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 458 in 2000, 199 in 2001, 70 in 2002, 11 in 2003, 8 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Wrestler (3rd runner-up in 2004 and in 2003), Most Improved (3rd runner-up in 2002), Inspirational (2nd runner-up in 2003)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Got his first taste of championship gold in January 2000, beating K-Krush (Ron Killings) for the NWA Wildside TV title ... Briefly joined WCW before the company folded in 2001 ... Later rejected a WWE developmental deal offer ... Became the first TNA X champion on the company's first show on June 19, 2002 ... Lost the belt to Low-Ki two months later, but not before teaming with Jerry Lynn to win the NWA tag belts ... Carved out a niche as TNA's most dynamic and innovative young star ... Won the NWA title for the first time on June 11, 2003, beating Jeff Jarrett and Raven in a three-way match ... Was managed by Vince Russo ... Dropped the belt back to Jarrett four months later ... Pinned C.M. Punk to win the ROH pure title tournament in February 2004 ... Stripped of that title when TNA stopped its contracted talent from competing in ROH ... Regained NWA title in April 2004, but lost it just four weeks later ... After a violent feud with Abyss, decided to compete in the X division again, regaining the X title on June 9, 2004 ... Lost it in a three-way match, then regained it earlier this year from Petey Williams ... Had an epic feud with Christopher Daniels during which he lost the title ... Won his third NWA title by beating Jarrett at Hard Justice.

The Styles clash is beyond devastating

•••••A.J.
STYLES

A.J. STYLES

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

While Styles' first NWA title win may have been his shining moment, his latest title victory at Hard Justice was much sweeter. Styles is a fan favorite and appears poised for a long run as champion ... although, we thought that when he won the belt last year, too. It is absolutely necessary for TNA to get behind Styles and give him a chance to develop into the company's franchise player.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Styles is best when his feet are off the mat. Anytime he can take to the air, he can launch himself at his opponents like a Patriot missile. Possibly the best aerialist in wrestling.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Styles still isn't a ring general. There are times when a solid kick to the gut is just as effective—and much more practical—than a suicidal corkscrew plancha. Just because he can execute the flashy moves doesn't mean he has to do so in every match. Once he learns that lesson, he will be an even more dangerous force.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

New faces. As NWA champion, it's up to him to put his title on the line against the exciting contenders. Daniels, Chris Sabin, Petey Williams, Monty Brown, and Shocker would be terrific foes.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

A reign in which he defended mostly against Jarrett, The Outlaw, Kevin Nash, and Sean Waltman would be a disappointment.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Conservatism. As previously noted, sometimes less is more. Styles must be able to recognize real openings for his high-risk maneuvers and know when to put it all on the line and when to play it safe.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Stepping down from the heavyweight division in late-2004 and prioritizing. By getting back to his roots as the kingpin of the X division, he was able to put Jarrett out of his mind. Instead of obsessing over Jarrett, he found himself and scouted Jarrett from afar. When he was ready to make a stand, his plan paid off.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Aligning himself with Vince Russo. Styles says he learned a lot from Russo, and we're sure he did. But Russo's presence cast a pall over his first NWA title reign, as Russo continuously tried to grab the spotlight for himself. Styles is much, *much* better off without Vinny Ru.

WE SAID IT:

"Phenomenal is the perfect word to describe Styles. Whenever I watch him, I have to pick my jaw up off the floor after some crazy new move he pulls off. A worthy NWA champion."

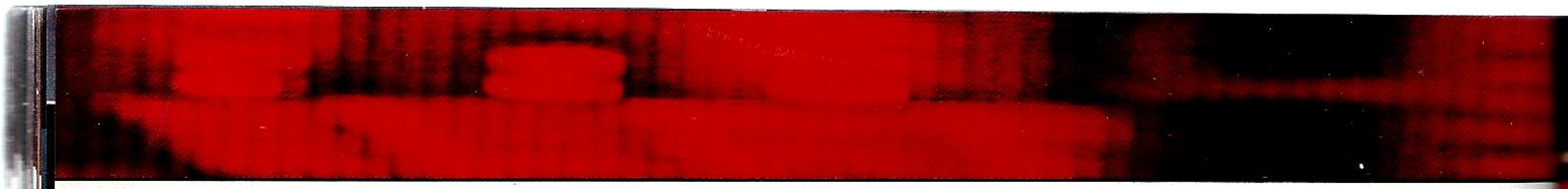
—*Contributing Writer Liz Hunter*

"I just hope Styles won't get cut off at the knees again on this latest title reign. He is TNA's biggest homegrown star, and he deserves a chance to shine. A long reign is definitely in order here."

—*Senior Writer Frank Krewda*

"In my opinion, he and Chris Daniels are probably the two most exciting wrestlers I see in the sport today."

—*Contributing Writer Matt Brock*



RAVEN

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"

WEIGHT: 237

HOMETOWN: Short Hills, NJ

YEARS PRO: 17

MAJOR TITLES WON: WWE hardcore (26 times), ECW heavyweight (2 times), ECW tag team (4 times), WCW U.S., WCW World tag team, WCW light heavyweight, NWA Pacific Northwest tag team (3 times), NWA Pacific Northwest heavyweight (3 times), USWA tag team, MEWF Mid-Atlantic heavyweight, HWA tag team, 3PW heavyweight, USA Pro heavyweight (2 times)

"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 162 in 1991, 66 in 1992, 116 in 1993, 114 in 1995, 37 in 1996, 39 in 1997, 61 in 1998, 75 in 1999, 62 in 2000, 53 in 2001, 62 in 2002, 22 in 2003, 35 in 2004

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Rookie (2nd runner-up in 1989), Feud (3rd runner-up in 2003), Comeback (2nd runner-up in 2003)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

The brooding madman from New Jersey has gone through many incarnations during his 17 years in the sport ... Debuted as Scotty the Body in Pacific Northwest Wrestling ... Had a cup of coffee in the Dallas-based GWF as Scott Anthony, and then showed up in WCW as the surfboard-toting Scotty Flamingo ... Shocked Brian Pillman for the light heavyweight title in 1992 ... After a brief stint in the USWA, showed up in the WWF as the spoiled Johnny Polo, managing The Quebecers to the World tag title ... Developed his grunge-influenced Raven character in 1995 and finally hit his stride in ECW ... Became one of the most controversial—and entertaining—characters in the sport en route to winning two ECW heavyweight titles ... Jumped to WCW, where he formed The Flock ... His U.S. title run was derailed after less than one full day by Goldberg ... Returned to ECW in 1999 and then joined WWE and was a focal point of the hardcore division ... Was released by WWE in January 2003 and showed up in TNA, proclaiming it was his destiny to wear the NWA title ... Although he pushed Jeff Jarrett to the limit on several occasions, he has yet to win that title ... Snagged indy bookings in promotions like 3PW and USA Pro, and even had a brief run in Ring of Honor ... Invented the "Clockwork Orange House Of Fun" match and always has his eye on the NWA title.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Deciding to go Extreme. For a guy coming off a WWF run as a flamboyant, rich kid manager, Raven took a major gamble with a little indy promotion in a tough part of Philadelphia. Raven took flight at the ECW Arena and helped to make ECW along the way.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Playing possum. Raven is almost always in control, even when he appears to be in trouble. He can hit that surprise drop toehold and take over again at any time.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Years of hardcore brawls have taken a toll. Although he hides it well, Raven usually wrestles in pain, and those aches inhibit his range of motion.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Tommy Dreamer. Sure, Raven wants the NWA title. But he never gets tired of destroying and embarrassing his childhood nemesis. Raven owned Dreamer like no one's business during their two-year feud in ECW. With all the ECW nostalgia going on, Raven must be feeling the itch to ruin Dreamer's world all over again.

Raven dusts off the anklelock against Dustin Rhodes

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Young guns. He can't allow himself to become the kind of veteran up-and-comers challenge and beat to make a name for themselves. He has to choose his battles wisely at this stage of his career.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Kimona Wana-Laya, if for no other reason than we miss her ... a lot.

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Joining WCW at the height of his ECW fame. Raven made a great deal of money. Because he was a hot commodity at the time, he called his own shots instead of becoming a pawn to others.

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Whatever you do, don't say "Polo" around him. He's still sensitive.

WE SAID IT:

"The key to Raven's overwhelming success in ECW was that he developed a very realistic ring persona at a time when other promotions were still shoving cartoon characters down the fans' throats. Raven was a grown-up, the kind of guy you see—and try to avoid—in dive bars. He resonated in ECW. Unfortunately, both WCW and WWE—and, to a lesser extent, TNA—didn't really know how to present that sort of character."

—Senior Writer Dan Murphy

"It's hard to believe Raven has been in the game for almost two decades. He stays fresh and relevant and can still come across as an up-and-comer and not a grizzled veteran in the later stages of his career."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"I'm still pulling for Raven to win that NWA title one day. So many guys have gotten shots and dropped back to the mid-card or left the company, but Raven is always circling like a hungry shark. You have to admire his dedication."

—Senior Writer Harry Burkett

Jeff HARDY

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'1"
WEIGHT: 212
HOMETOWN: Cameron, NC
YEARS PRO: 11

MAJOR TITLES WON: WWF Intercontinental, WWE World tag team (5 times), WWE hardcore (3 times), WCW World tag team, OMEGA tag team, NWA 2000 tag team, NFWA heavyweight, OMEGA New Frontier, NEW junior heavyweight, NDW light heavyweight, UWA (Japan) middleweight

***"PWI* 500" RANKINGS:** 239 in 1998, 76 in 1999, 30 in 2000, 17 in 2001, 32 in 2002, 64 in 2003

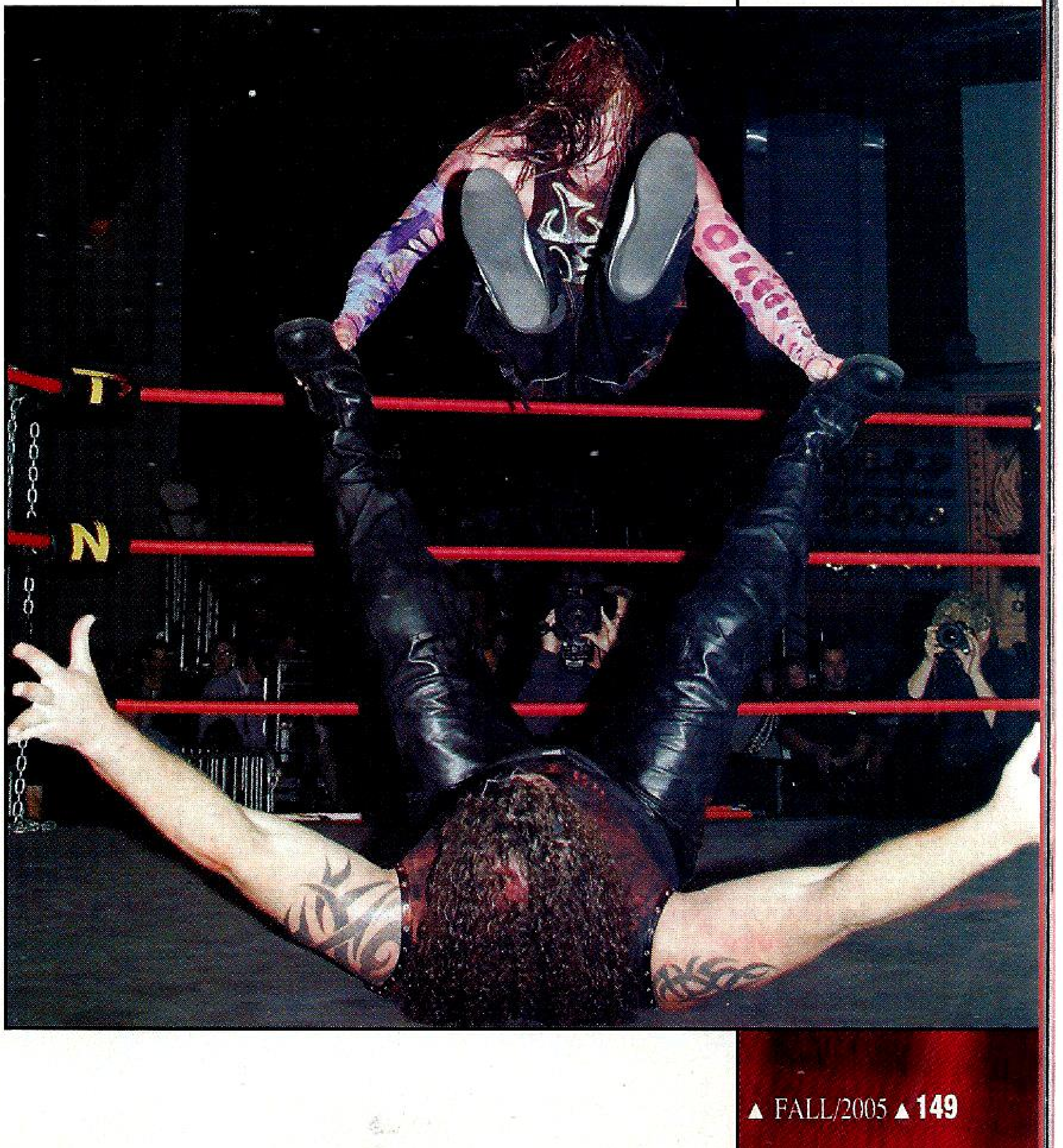
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Tag Team (with Matt Hardy, 2000, 1st runner-up in 1999, 2nd runner-up in 2001), Match (2001, 2000, 2nd runner-up in 2000, 3rd runner-up in 2001), Feud (3rd runner-up in 2000), Comeback (1st runner-up in 2004), Most Improved (1st runner-up in 1999)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Began wrestling at the tender age of 16 ... Competed under a mask as Will o' the Wisp, winning the OMEGA New Frontier title in August 1997 ... Beat brother Matt (who was competing as Surge) for the NDW light heavyweight title in early-1998 ... Attended a WWF-sponsored camp run by Dory Funk Jr. that summer and was wrestling full-time in the WWF by September 1998 ... He and Matt won five WWE World tag championships and were the company's most popular team of the late-1990s ... With his electrifying swanton bomb and enigmatic appeal, Jeff seemed to be the breakout star of the team ... Upset Triple-H for the Intercontinental title on April 10, 2001, but lost it back to Helmsley six days later ... Beat Jerry Lynn for the light heavyweight title two months after that, but that reign lasted only 20 days ... Went on to win the hardcore and European titles as well, but never seemed comfortable in the role of champion, dropping both belts shortly after winning them ... Began showing signs of burnout and persistent aches and pains due to his daredevil style ... Was released by WWE in April 2003 ... Was mercilessly booed in an appearance for Ring of Honor ... Signed with TNA in the summer of 2004 and received a hero's welcome ... Failed in several NWA title shots against Jeff Jarrett ... Again showing signs of burnout ... Missed May's Hard Justice PPV when he missed his flight to Orlando.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Surprising "The Game" for the I-C title in 2001. Many people thought Hardy was on his way to becoming the next Shawn Michaels. When he beat Hunter, it looked like a new star was born. Unfortunately for Jeff, he has never reached the same level of success again.


Jeff Hardy drops a leg where it'll hurt Abyss most

NA

●●●●●
STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Hardy doesn't wrestle a formulaic match. Like a jazz artist, he seems to flow with whatever he's feeling. Sometimes he can be brilliant, sometimes he can be lousy. He's strongest when he feels motivated and hungry.

●●●●●
WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Conversely, he is weakest when he's just not "feeling" the match. Like many European hockey players, Hardy has been accused of coasting from time to time. When he's not fully dialed in to his matches, he can be surprisingly beatable.

●●●●●
WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

A.J. Styles. Jeff matches up very well with the new NWA champion. If there's a match he could really get "up" for, it would be against Styles with the NWA title on the line. If that's not enough motivation for him, he's in the wrong line of work.

●●●●●
WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Matt Hardy. Assuming Matt joins TNA, Jeff has nothing to gain by getting tied up in a feud with him. There's nothing wrong with teaming up here and there, but Jeff probably wouldn't fare well in matches against his brother. Not only would he lose, but losses would seriously hurt his career.

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SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Scott D'Amore. Jeff Hardy as a member of Team Canada? It's not *that* unlikely. Remember when Hacksaw Duggan joined Lance Storm's Team Canada in WCW? Seriously, the big knock on Hardy is that he lacks focus. Does he want to wrestle? Does he want to be a rock star or a poet? If he's still serious about wrestling, he needs a manager who can handle his transportation and keep him focused. D'Amore could do it better than anybody.

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SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Leaving WWE. Maybe throwing away a big money contract doesn't seem all too smart, but Hardy had lost his passion. His erratic behavior all but forced WWE to release him. To borrow a line from Shawn Michaels, he had lost his smile. He was wise enough to realize he needed a break to get his head together. If he just went through the motions for the paydays, he would have deprived fans of the matches they expected out of him. More importantly, he could have gotten hurt by wrestling with his mind on other things. Sometimes a step backward is a good thing.

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BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Losing to Jarrett at Victory Road. Redemption was in Hardy's grasp. And he blew it.

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WE SAID IT:

"It's getting harder and harder to make excuses for Jeff Hardy. Either he wants to wrestle or he doesn't. If he's serious about wrestling, it's about time for him to show it consistently."

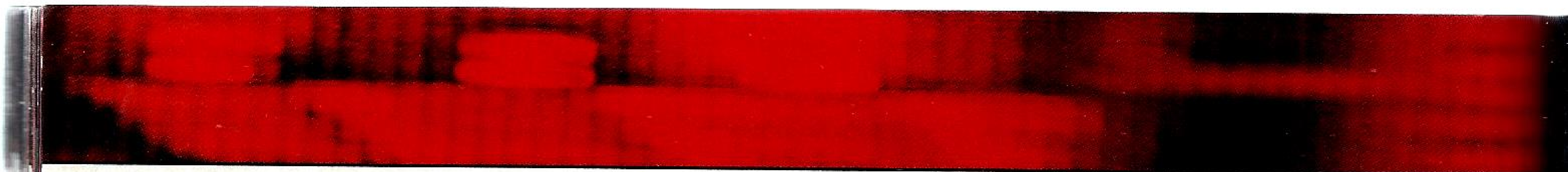
—Publisher Stu Saks

"Jeff is dangerously close to getting the ax from TNA. I think the only reason they're keeping him around is for some program with Matt. If Matt hadn't been fired by WWE, I think Jeff would have been fired by TNA. And he'd only have himself to blame."

—Contributing Writer Liz Hunter

"It's become trendy to be a Jeff Hardy basher, but only a fool would deny his incredible talent and ability. Jeff Hardy creates excitement, and wrestling needs more excitement these days."

—Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker



Christopher DANIELS ●●●●●

●●●●● VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'

WEIGHT: 210

HOMETOWN: Los Angeles, CA

YEARS PRO: 12

MAJOR TITLES WON: TNA X, NWA tag team (3 times), Ring of Honor tag team, 3PW heavyweight, ECWA heavyweight (2 times), IWGP junior tag team, UPW heavyweight (2 times), FWA heavyweight, British Commonwealth junior heavyweight, APW Worldwide Internet, EWF heavyweight, Windy City heavyweight, Windy City league, Windy City lightweight, Windy City tag team (2 times), World Wrestling Council tag team, MCW tag team, NWA Florida heavyweight

***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 114 in 1999, 76 in 2000, 65 in 2001, 57 in 2002, 20 in 2003, 25 in 2004

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** None

●●●●● CAREER AT A GLANCE:

"The Fallen Angel" can boast one of the most devoted fan followings anywhere ... Debuted in 1993 in Chicago's Windy City Pro ... Toured Puerto Rico in 1995 and began competing extensively in California in 1997 ... Made it to the finals of the 1999 Super 8 Tournament with a win over Matt Hardy ... Has gone on to become the only wrestler ever to win the Super 8 twice by triumphing in 2000 and 2004 ... Had a brief run in WCW in its dying days ... First joined TNA's X division in 2002 ... Earned a rabid fan following through his work in UPW, APW, and, finally, Ring of Honor ... Won the ROH tag title with Donovan Morgan ... Competed under a yellow mask as the "hot and spicy" Curry Man in Japan ... Formed Triple X with Elix Skipper and Low-Ki, and went on to win three NWA tag titles ... Guided Team NWA to the Americas X Cup championship in 2004 ... Won the X championship at the 2004 Destination X PPV ... His series against A.J. Styles has been lauded by a few as a Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat, albeit on a smaller scale, for this generation ... One of the most decorated and respected competitors in the U.S. today.

●●●●● DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Finally winning the TNA X championship. Everyone figured it was inevitable that Daniels would put his mark on the division, but he was spreading himself thin by competing all over the world and for the longest time couldn't mount a serious challenge for the belt. Now he's in a position to be promoted by TNA and used as one of the company's major selling points.

●●●●● STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Daniels always seems utterly relaxed and at home in the ring. Wrestling seems to come naturally to him. He rarely panics or makes major errors, and always seems to be in command, even when he's on the defensive. His greatest strength is his ability to keep his emotions in check and focus on the task at hand—winning matches. Daniels keeps a level head; that allows him to be just as effective in a three-minute match as he is in a 30-minute "Ironman" bout.

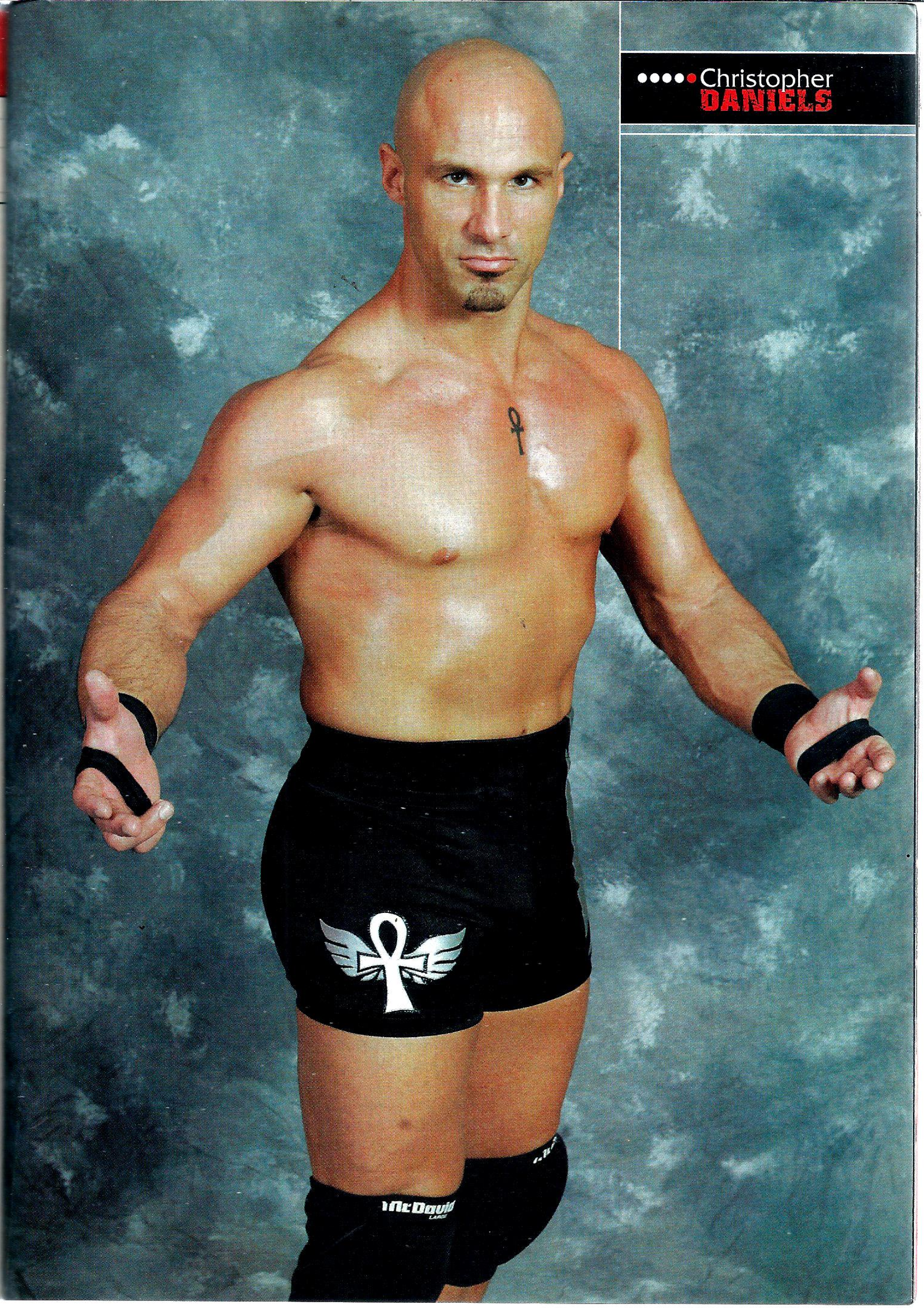
●●●●● WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

This is a picky one, but Daniels could use another 10 to 15 pounds of bulk. Not too much to affect his moonsaults or other aerial moves, but a little more muscle mass to help him when he faces brawling heavyweights. If Daniels ever wants to wear the NWA title, he should probably get a little bigger.

●●●●● WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Jushin Liger. TNA has done a great job of opening the promotion to international talent. Liger still has plenty of name recognition among American fans, and he's a man Daniels has faced in Japan. If Daniels can continue to defend the X title against some of the top international talent, he will increase the prestige of the championship and continue to build his own legacy. Daniels vs. Liger would be a TNA dream match.

●●●●● Christopher
DANIELS



Christopher Daniels superplexes Chris Sabin *and* A.J. Styles

●●●●●

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

The only thing we can suggest is the NWA heavyweight title itself. It would fit nicely around his waist.

●●●●●

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Eschewing the customary ROH handshake in 2002. It seems pretty silly, but Daniels infuriated fans and his peers by refusing to honor his opponents with a handshake. This simple little act made him one of ROH's top villains for a while. When he did finally shake an opponent's hand, it actually meant something, imbuing his bouts with more significance. A bit of showmanship made him stand out.

●●●●●

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

As we noted before, Daniels has a tendency to spread himself thin by accepting bookings all over the country and in Japan. While he has won more than his share of titles, it has made it harder for him to break through to mainstream fans who follow only one promotion.

●●●●●

WE SAID IT:

"Daniels is blazing his own path. He is independent in the truest sense of the word. I'd fear seeing him in WWE only because I'd be afraid he would have to tone himself down and compromise everything that makes him unique."

—*Managing Editor Brandi Mankiewicz*

"Just take a look at his listing of titles! What else can I add that that doesn't say?"

—*Senior Writer Dan Murphy*

"A Daniels-Styles series for the NWA title is exactly what TNA needs at this stage. This could be 2005's Feud of the Year."

—*Contributing Writer Jason Langin*

●●●●●

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

There's really no one opponent Daniels needs to avoid. Instead, he has to avoid growing stagnant. He has to issue challenges, call out opponents, and continue to test himself. He can't allow himself to be pigeonholed as "just" the X champion as Sonny Siaki, Kid Kash, and Chris Sabin were before him. He needs to be proactive and dynamic ... which shouldn't be a problem.

Monty
BROWN

VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'2"
WEIGHT: 268
HOMETOWN: Detroit, MI
YEARS PRO: 2
MAJOR TITLES WON: None
"*PWI* 500" RANKINGS: 101 in 2004
***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:**
Rookie (2004)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

Monty Brown played linebacker in the NFL from 1993 to 1996, spending two seasons with the Buffalo Bills and one with the New England Patriots ... Trained for a career inside the ring under mixed martial arts great (and former NWA heavyweight champion) Dan Severn ... First entered TNA in late-2003 ... Feuded with Sabu and Abyss ... Beat Abyss in a brutal "Serengeti Survival" match at Turning Point, leaving Abyss laying in a pile of thumbtacks ... Beat Kevin Nash and "Diamond" Dallas Page to earn a title shot against NWA heavyweight champion Jeff Jarrett at Final Resolution ... Came extremely close to winning the NWA title later that night, but ultimately failed to unseat Jarrett ... Teamed with Page to beat Team Canada's Bobby Rude and Eric Young at Final Resolution ... Stunned his fans by inexplicably turning against DDP and joining forces with Jarrett ... Currently involved in contract negotiations with TNA.

DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

"The Alpha Male" pounced on Sabu in an intense falls-count-anywhere match on April 14, 2004. It was a true baptism of fire for the rookie, but Brown showed a lot of guts and did a wonderful job. He became a top contender overnight.

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Brown will probably always have his critics, particularly in a promotion in which fans have learned to appreciate the intricate X division style. But like the great power merchants of the 1980s, Brown is explosive from the moment he hits the ring. His raw power and intensity are usually enough to overwhelm almost any opponent in the opening five minutes.

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

There's a price to pay for all that intensity. Brown has a tendency to run out of gas after just a few minutes. He usually recovers when he gets a chance to catch his breath, but at this point in his career, he lacks the ability to mount a sustained effort over several minutes.

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Brown is more comfortable matching power against fellow strongmen like Abyss and Nash.

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

It's not so much a type of opponent Brown should avoid as much as a type of *match* he should avoid. "The Alpha Male" needs to dictate the pace and dominate his matches. He can't allow smaller or more devious opponents an opportunity to swing the match in their favor by outwrestling him or using foreign objects. With his relative lack of experience and underdeveloped scientific skills, Brown can't afford to be on the defensive for very long.

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

Ideally, Brown could improve his stamina and add more scientific and submission moves to his arsenal. But Goldberg, Hulk Hogan, Batista, and many others have aptly shown that power and adrenaline can be enough to take some special wrestlers to the top. Brown is perfectly suited for the style he uses right now.

●●●●● Monty **BROWN**

"The Alpha Male" twists the arm of Eric Young

●●●●●

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Going right after Sabu, who was one of the most respected veterans in TNA at the time. By decisively beating a hardcore legend, he earned instant credibility.

●●●●●

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Brown's decision to turn heel and join forces with Jarrett was one of the most mind-boggling decisions we've ever seen. Most observers thought Brown could be TNA's breakout star, the man who could finally unseat Jarrett and carry the flag for the company. Instead, he has become just another hired goon. All of his momentum dried up. It might take a while for him to recover.

●●●●●

WE SAID IT:

"I don't really know where Monty Brown's getting his career advice. He picked the absolute worst time to turn his back on the fans. What did it get him?"

—Contributing Writer Jason Langin

"Brown has a real star quality about him. It's just a shame that TNA management seems to be reluctant to let him be the breakout sensation he could become. I wonder if Vince McMahon might get the chance to do better by him."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Hopefully, Brown will pick up where he was before his heel turn when his contract situation is settled. Either he'll have a new deal with TNA or he'll be WWE's next acquisition. And either way, big things are in store from him."

—Senior Writer Will Welsh

Dallas PAGE ●●●●●

●●●●● VITAL STATISTICS

HEIGHT: 6'5"

WEIGHT: 256

HOMETOWN: Point Pleasant, NJ

YEARS PRO: 13

MAJOR TITLES WON: WCW World (3 times), WCW U.S. (2 times), WCW World tag team (3 times), WCW TV, WWE European, WWE World tag team

***"PWI 500"* RANKINGS:** 111 in 1995, 54 in 1996, 4 in 1997, 4 in 1998, 6 in 1999, 17 in 2000, 19 in 2001

***PWI* AWARDS/RUNNER-UP FINISHES:** Wrestler (2nd runner-up in 1998, 3rd runner-up in 1997), Feud (1997), Most Popular (3rd runner-up in 1997 and in 1998), Most Hated (1999), Most Improved (1995), Rookie (1st runner-up in 1992)

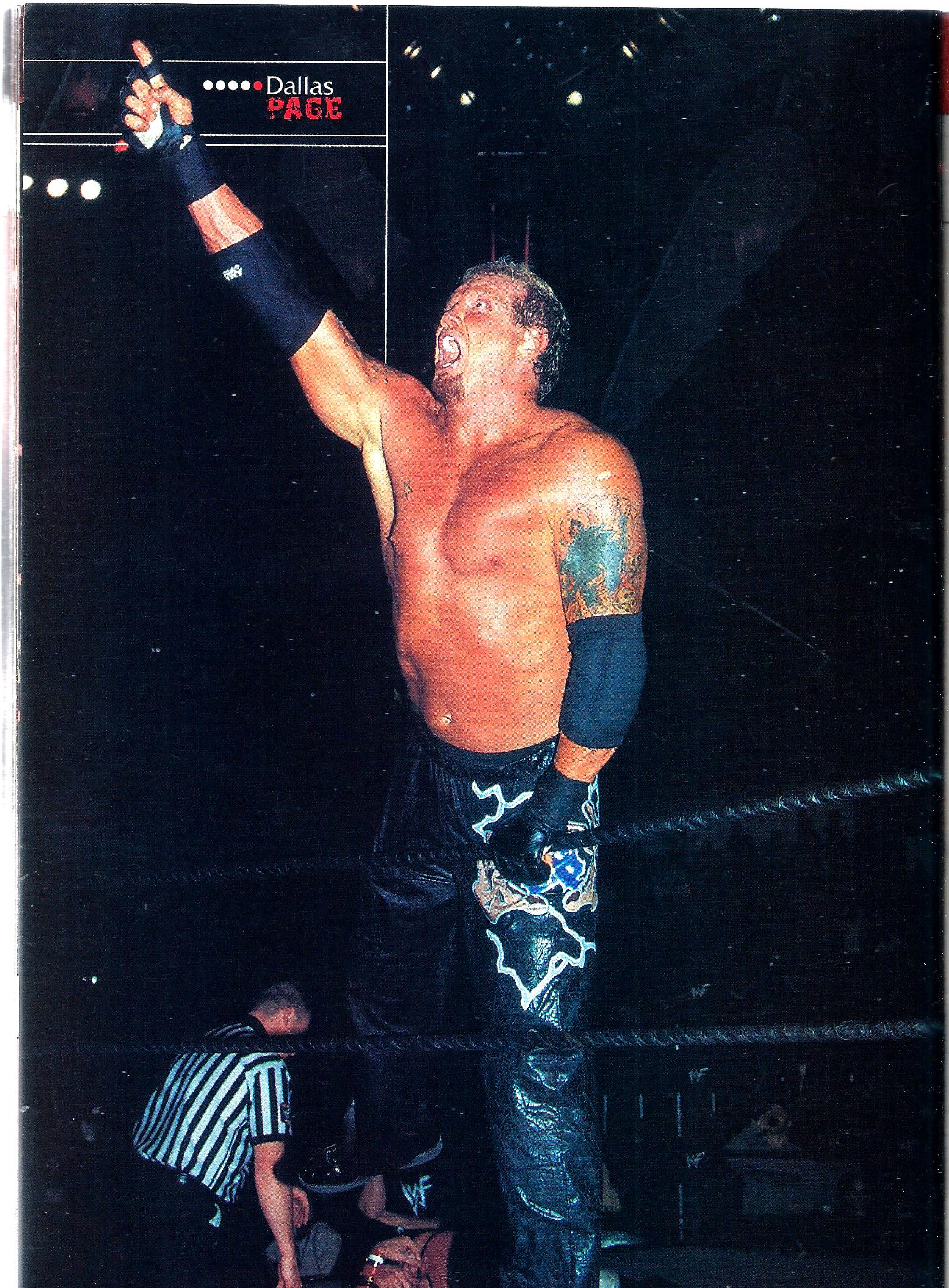
●●●●● CAREER AT A GLANCE:

DDP got involved in wrestling at an age at which many wrestlers are already contemplating retirement, taking up managing at 32 and stepping into the ring as a wrestler at 36 … Took personal pride in defying the skeptics and became known for his tireless work ethic and self-promotion … Suffered a torn rotator cuff and was released from WCW in 1992, only to return in 1994 at the behest of Eric Bischoff … Slowly climbed the ladder, feuding with Marc Mero, Brutus Beefcake, and Evad Sullivan … Career took off after the formation of the New World Order … Page spurned the group's advances and began a crusade against the NWO … Huge wins over Randy Savage, Curt Hennig, and Chris Benoit followed … Teamed with NBA star Karl Malone and talk show host Jay Leno in separate PPV tag bouts against Hulk Hogan … Won his first WCW World title in a four-corners match against Ric Flair, Sting, and Hogan in 1999 … A three-time, three-time, three-time WCW World champion … Showed up in WWE after the demise of WCW and stalked The Undertaker's wife, Sara … Was badly beaten by 'Taker throughout the second half of 2001 … Became a fan favorite, adopting a self-help type persona … Retired from wrestling in 2002 due to spinal injuries … Was lured back to the ring by TNA in November 2004 … Has picked up where he had left off in his WCW days as a wildly popular main event talent.

●●●●● DEFINING CAREER MOMENT:

Winning his first world championship. Most people considered Page the weakest link in a match that included three other wrestlers with (at that point) 29 world championships

DDP has come close to beating Jeff Jarrett in TNA



Dallas PAGE

among them. Page would not be denied and wrestled a brilliant, gutsy match to achieve his dream and become the WCW World champion.

●●●●●

STRONGEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

At this stage of his career, DDP is willing to take his time. He doesn't rush an opponent or make the sorts of mistakes you get from younger wrestlers. He paces himself very well and is extremely well-attuned to what his body can and cannot do. It helps that he can hit a Diamond cutter from virtually any angle at any point in the match to take it home.

●●●●●

WEAKEST PART OF HIS MATCHES:

Exactly what condition is his neck in these days? Page has packed a lot into his decade-plus of active competition, and he has taken some real beatings. He has to constantly protect his neck and back out for fear that another wrestler might try to injure him to make a name for himself. It has to be hard for Page to relax in the ring knowing he's more fragile than he was five years ago.

●●●●●

WHOM HE WANTS TO FACE:

Sting. Sting has made a handful of appearances in TNA over the past three years. He's not expected to return, but Page would love to hook up with him in a scientific series against a man some consider the dominant WCW champion of the 1990s.

●●●●●

WHOM HE OUGHT TO AVOID:

Abyss. Frankly, the monster just isn't stable. Page says he's healthy and able to handle himself against any competitor. Maybe not Abyss. If Page has a weak spot, you can be certain Abyss would exploit it, and for DDP, that would be a bad thing.

●●●●●

SHOULD BE ADDED TO HIS REPERTOIRE:

The TNA X title. Really. Page has always been a man who shrugged off critics. Why not make a run at the X title? Putting a former world champion in the mix would add an element that has been missing in X division bouts and give younger stars like Michael Shane and others a chance to face a veteran on their own terms. The X division is supposed to be all about "no limits," and so is DDP. It makes sense to us!

●●●●●

SMARTEST MOVE HE EVER MADE:

Going public with his marriage to Kimberly. Having the knockout Diamond Doll at his side certainly helped him stand out from the pack.

●●●●●

BIGGEST MISTAKE HE EVER MADE:

Begging The Undertaker to "make him famous." 'Taker did, but not in the way Page wanted. It was the most embarrassing series of Page's career.

●●●●●

WE SAID IT:

"Middle-aged and crazy. That's DDP. He's still got a few good years left in him, and I think there's a lot he can teach some of these young pups in TNA. It's been good to see him back."

—Contributing Writer Matt Brock

"Having Page in TNA is a mixed blessing. On one hand, he's a professional and willing to work with virtually anyone. On the other, he's yet another old face from WCW. If TNA wants to present itself as hip and cutting-edge, it has to stop pushing wrestlers who were big many years ago."

—Senior Writer Frank Krewda

"DDP may not be the wrestler he used to be, but he has learned enough tricks of the trade to compensate for slowing down a step or two. It wouldn't surprise me to see him win the NWA title once or twice before he's through."

—Contributing Writer Bill Meltzer

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